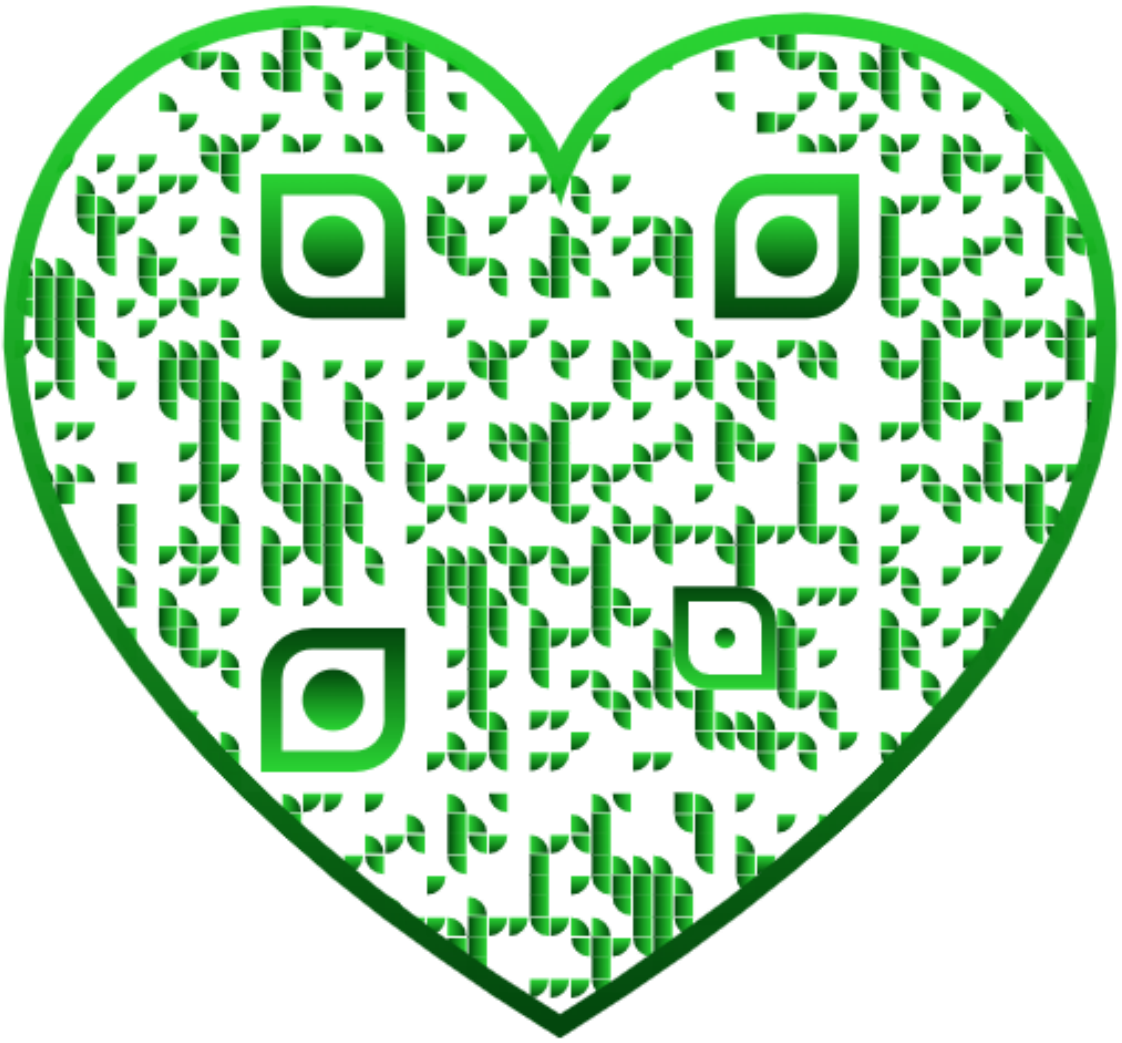
GUITAR GIRL MAGAZINE

Winter 2019
Issue 10 | $12.50

Lindsey Stirling
Sharon Isbin
Carlene Carter
Amythyst Kiah
Vicki Genfan
Kalie Shorr
Brooke White
EmiSunshine
The Sisterhood Band
The Wandering Hearts
& More ...

MADDIE Poppe

Martin Guitar
Shubb Capo
Yamaha
PRS
Taylor Guitars
Córdoba
Guild
Fender
& More...



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TARA TALK

I love the sound of acoustic instruments, and I love this time of year. So it seems only fitting to honor acoustic instruments and the joyous holiday season here in the Winter Issue of *Guitar Girl Magazine*!

American Idol Season 16 winner **Maddie Poppe** graces one of our covers, and while not a "guitarist," **Lindsey Stirling** — our other cover artist — is an accomplished violinist with a holiday album and show. Also in this issue, Grammy-nominated artist **Amythyst Kiah** chats with us about her single "Black Myself," **Carlene Carter** fills us in on life as a Carter Girl and the new Carter Family album, **Vicki Genfan** discusses finding light in dark times, **Sharon Isbin** talks about recording with the Pacifica Quartet, **Kalie Shorr** opens up with *Open Book*, and another *American Idol* contestant **Brooke White** talks about writing and recording her new album *Calico*. We also chatted with **Ruby Stewart** and **Alyssa Bonagura** of **The Sisterhood Band**, **Wandering Hearts,** and **Brinn Black** while at CMA Fest, and **Aubrie Sellers, Judy Paster,** and **Lizzie No** at AMERICANAFEST. Adding to the lineup are **Mean Mary, Brianna Jorgensen, Dayna Manning, EmiSunshine, Brianna Musco, Leah Martin-Brown,** and **Marielle Kraft**.

The She Rocks Awards have announced their honorees and we have all the details on their upcoming show in January in Anaheim, California. Tegan and Sara performed their "Hey, I'm Just Like You" show at the Variety Playhouse in Atlanta and we bring you highlights on the show. We spotlight some new holiday releases, acoustic guitar amplifiers and effects pedals, and offer fingerstyle tips for beginners. For reviews, check out acoustics from Martin, Fender, PRS, Yamaha, Taylor, Córdoba, and Guild.

And, of course, our Fun Stuff like Ask Alexx by Alexx Calise, our Gig Gallery brought to you by Kirk Stauffer, Jack Lue, and Chuck Lapinsky, our Fan Favorites, New Music Releases, and our Mind Games. And we have a great contest this month!

This is just a sampling of this content-packed issue, so let's turn the page and get this journey into the wonderful world of women in music under way. Enjoy!

Happy Holidays!
~ Tara Low

Notice of Correction:
In Issue 8, the article titled "The Woman's Touch: Leaving a feminine mark on the bass guitar" authored by Marco DiSandro, Lindsey Borders, and Victoria Shaffer erroneously stated that Meshell "Ndegeocello wrote the bass line for "Wild Night," a celebrated Mellancamp tune, awarding her with deserved notoriety." "Wild Night" is a Van Morrison song that was covered by John Mellancamp and Meshell Ndegeocello in 1994. The author attributed to that portion of the article was Victoria Shaffer.

GUITAR GIRL MAGAZINE
ENCOURAGE. INSPIRE. EMPOWER.

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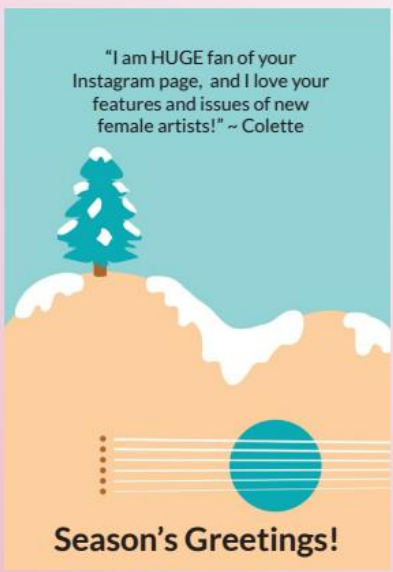
COMMUNITY

SHE Said:

"My favorite Martin guitars are 000s or 000s or OMs. The day I was in the [Martin] museum, I played an 00-28 on stage. I usually play an OMJM or an OM-28, but there's something I love about small body guitars, and, of course, they have a very nice selection of them at Martin. They have a way of making small body guitars sound huge without being this massive thing that for a girl can sometimes be a lot to play every night."

~ Lindsay Ell,
Interview with *Guitar Girl Magazine*,
Issue 5, October 2018



We want to hear from you!

Questions, comments, suggestions, road stories!
Send them directly to: **info@guitargirlmag.com**

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GUITAR GIRL MAGAZINE 2020 CALENDAR

Guitar Girl Magazine's 2020 calendar is a beautiful wall calendar.
This 11 x 8.5-inch calendar features the extremely talented Ariel Bellvalaire on the cover, followed by 12 months each showcasing a fabulous female guitar player followed by a bonus four-month pre-planner for 2021 and two pages for notes.

Order yours today for $14.99 on our site at GuitarGirlMag.com.

JANUARY
Ariel Bellvalaire

FEBRUARY
Angie Swan

MARCH
Britt Lightning

APRIL
Alicia Vigil

MAY
Emily Ruvidich

JUNE
Lexii Lynn Frazier

JULY
Nikki Stringfield

AUGUST
Kiki Wongo

SEPTEMBER
Candice Levinson

OCTOBER
Jules Whelpton

NOVEMBER
Keona Lee

DECEMBER
Courtney Cox aka CC Shred

JAN/FEB 2021
Lynnay Della Lucé

MAR/APR 2021
Marla'O

NOTES
Rose Cora Perry

NOTES
Briana Alexis

To purchase, visit our website at **GuitarGirlMag.com**

The 2019 Crossroads Guitar Collection
This collection is sold in North America exclusively at Guitar Center locations and online via **GuitarCenter.com**. Pictured L-R: Fender Custom Shop Eric Clapton Blind Faith Telecaster by Todd Krause; Gibson Custom Eric Clapton 1964 Firebird I; Martin 000-42EC Crossroads Ziricote; Martin 00-42JSC John Mayer Crossroads; and PRS Private Stock Carlos Santana Crossroads.

SonoTone
Premium Strings
SonoTone.com

Supro Blues King 8 Amplifier
SuproUSA.com

Epiphone
"Holy Diver" Les Paul
Epiphone.com

Gibson Slash
1966 EDS-1275
Doubleneck
Gibson.com

Martin
OOO-12E

Martin
D12-E

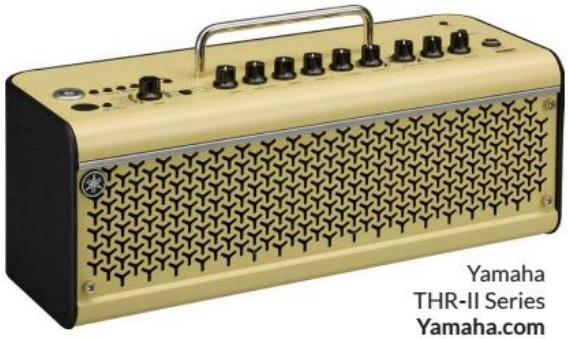
Martin
D-X1E

Martin
D-X2E

Martin D45
Woodstock
50th

MartinGuitar.com

Positive Grid Spark
Guitar Amp and App
PositiveGrid.com/spark



Yamaha
THR-II Series
Yamaha.com

BOSS DD-3T and DD-8
Digital Delay Pedals
Boss.info

Lowden Guitars O-25
LowdenGuitars.com

Gibson Alvin Lee ES-335 '69 Festival'
Gibson.com

La Grange The Wheel
LaGrange.Guitars

Cort X700 Duality Guitar
CortGuitars.com

Whiskey Barrel Top
Custom T-Style Guitars
bigdguitars.com

PRS 35th Anniversary
Custom 24 Models
PRSGuitars.com

PRS McCarty Family
PRSGuitars.com

THE 2020 SHE ROCKS AWARDS

CELEBRATING 8 YEARS

2020 Honorees:

LZZY HALE • LINDA PERRY • GLORIA GAYNOR
SUZI QUATRO • BEATIE WOLFE
EBONIE SMITH (ATLANTIC RECORDS)
SUZANNE D'ADDARIO BROUDER
(THE D'ADDARIO FOUNDATION)
TARA LOW (GUITAR GIRL MAGAZINE)
MYRNA SISLEN (MIDDLE C MUSIC)
JUDY SCHAEFER (PRS GUITARS)

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PHOTO OF LZZY HALE BY JUDY WON

THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS:

TEGAN AND SARA

PERFORM THEIR "HEY, I'M JUST LIKE YOU" SHOW AT VARIETY PLAYHOUSE IN ATLANTA

By Emily Levin

Photo by Elevin Photography

In late October, Tegan and Sara took the stage to perform a SOLD OUT show at the popular Atlanta venue Variety Playhouse, a converted 1940's movie theater to a now cozy, sit-down concert hall. The lights dim and a homemade video appears on stage making everyone laugh and asking the crowd to turn off their phones, creating a unique, intimate experience for a show like never before. If you're expecting the typical get on stage and play music until you can't hear or dance anymore kind of show, this is not it. The pop twin duo took an approach of getting the audience involved with their incredibly hilarious witty banter while letting you into their deepest parts of their personal lives, feeling their emotions, with adding in the music they wrote back in their high school years before they were anyone with a select few of their most famous hits.

The stage goes dark and a spotlight appears on Tegan as she grabs a book and begins to read part of her memoirs. As she reads the last sentence, you start to hear beautiful melodies from a piano while the lights change over to Sara as the music begins. Like I said before, this is not your average concert. Tegan and Sara stole the stage without a band, stripping down their songs to just a piano and guitar, giving their music a whole new and more powerful feel. Between each song, they read parts of "High School" (their new memoir that they took two years off to write). Breaking down every wall, they have given you a sense of who they truly are as women and being able to connect with hundreds of people, all while tugging on the audience's heartstrings at one time.

The stories Tegan and Sara share open up to deep roots about being teenage girls doing drugs while attending school, finding a guitar for the first time, the struggles they had with the feelings of falling in love with girls for the first time and coming out as part of the LGBTQ community. Let me be clear that they weren't sharing this to encourage drug use by any means; in fact, they advised against it. The girls simply were telling honest memories of how the sisters came to find a bond within each other while relating to topics and emotions that most teenagers have struggled with before. After one of their stories was told, they took to playing a song on their fourteen song setlist, taking out the massive production elements giving you meaning and greater insight into what inspired them to make such magnificent music for the world to hear.

Between stories and performing songs off their new album out now titled, *Hey, I'm Just Like You*, Tegan and Sara dug out some homemade videos sharing a few clips from the past days growing up when they were younger so you could physically see into parts of their lives. On every level, these performers had every single person in the audience entertained, totally captivated, and so mesmerized with how these ordinary individuals became such strong, inspirational women that make phenomenal music taking the world by storm.

Gibson and Sheryl Crow announce the Sheryl Crow Country Western Supreme

Created for **Sheryl Crow** and based off her own **Gibson Country Western**, the features of the **Gibson Sheryl Crow Country Western Supreme** signature are designed to deliver the sweet voice of the **classic Country Western** design with the added punch created from **Gibson Acoustic's 1930's Advanced bracing pattern**. The **Thermally Aged Sitka spruce top** and hide glue provide additional projection and increased expression with a wider dynamic range. Each guitar is outfitted with the astounding **Amulet M analog pickup** for accurate tone and response of the instrument when amplified. The **Gibson Sheryl Crow Country Western Supreme** marks the most highly customized **Country Western** in **Gibson's history** and it is finished in a **gorgeous Antique Cherry** which reveals the natural grain and beauty of this transcendent acoustic guitar. Every **Gibson Sheryl Crow Country Western Supreme** will be hand-signed by the artist and arrive with a **Certificate of Authenticity.**

For more information and specifications, visit **Gibson.com**

WHO, WHAT, WHERE, WHEN, WHY

HEATHER FINDLAY:

MUSICIAN AND CO-FOUNDER OF SECRET PROJECTS SECRET SARI DRESS CAMPAIGN

Photo by Andrea Beckers

Photo by Andrea Beckers

Who: I am an English singer-songwriter and have been in the business for 23 years. I cut my teeth with classic/progressive rock band Mostly Autumn between 1997-2010. Since then, I've raised two boys (Drayke (9) and Harlan (11)) and trained as a Reiki Master and a Kriya Yoga teacher for the Siddhanath Yoga Parampara.

My musical journey has brought a wonderful array of opportunities to work with such luminaries as Ritchie Blackmore, Jethro Tull, Ayreon, Uriah Heep, John Wetton, Nightwish's Troy Donockley, as well as Iona and Thunder, among many others.

In July of this year, I released my debut solo album *Wild White Horses* recorded at the legendary Rockfield Studios in Wales ("Bohemian Rhapsody"/*A Night at The Opera*). The album features Ian Anderson on flute, Troy Donockley on Uilleann Pipes, and Danny Bowes of Thunder on vocals in a bluesy rock duet.

I am super happy with the album, and it is really the first time I have been able to fully enjoy an album so soon after its completion. It was a joy working on it with my producer and co-writer, Luke Morley. We struck up a great partnership and just got in the flow. I think that is what makes all the difference. Nothing comes without musical chemistry, hard work, faith, and diligence, of course, but if you can do that and keep in the flow, for me, that is a recipe for success. It's been a long and winding journey so far with a lot of growth. The album deals with that in a sense, so it is also very true to who I am right now.

My first show of the tour supporting the album was in the USA at the She Rocks Showcase in Nashville for the Women's International Music Network (WiMN) as part of the 2019 Summer NAMM Show. It was such a buzz to kick off live proceedings in Nashville! The album has quite an Americana rock feel throughout, so it was pretty perfect. I was also invited by WiMN to speak on their panel about being a woman in the music industry and about my involvement with **Secret Projects** as a campaign leader.

THE #SHEROCKS SECRET SARI DRESS

An equally major project this year has been the launch of the #sherocks Secret Sari Dress campaign, co-founded by my cousin Fritha Vincent (Secret Projects CEO) and myself. The campaign is designed to combat the global issue of Human Trafficking and in this case, works with vulnerable women in West Bengal, India.

Photo by Howard Rankin

In such a complicated loop that is human trafficking, the Secret Sari Dress provides a simple, no-middle-man way of getting funds so desperately needed, straight to these women and their children. If a woman can earn just $25 per month, she has a much better chance of staying safe.

Ingeniously folding out of a small pocket in the back of the dress, the Secret Sari is by design, so tiny that it can be produced in the smallest of shelters with very little need for bulky storage or packaging.

The campaign was blessed from the beginning. It had the backing of such powerhouses as Floor Jansen of Nightwish, Arch Enemy's Alissa White-Gluz, Doro Pesch, and Lzzy Hale, among many others. These women all wore Secret Sari dresses on International Women's Day, posting pictures to social media encouraging their fans to buy them. The campaign spread like wildfire! Fans and press alike loved the campaign. Sponsorship and support also flooded in from companies from Gibson Guitars and Clarins to Siren Management, Nuclear Blast Records, and YouTube. It was just such a 'yes!' invoking project all round. [Check out @secretsaridress on Instagram for footage. Any of the hashtags used for the campaign will also take you to the reams of pictures and videos posted in support of the campaign. #shareyourpower #shakti #sherocks #womensempowerment #secretsaridress #sistersaredoingitforeachother]

"For every 100 dresses sold, another five women may be trained and employed. It is that simple."

With Christmas fast approaching, Secret Projects is offering free worldwide shipping on orders over £100, which provides a great incentive to treat your besties and girlfriends to the most empowering gift of 2019!

The most exciting thing yet is that we have another Secret Project brewing for International Women's Day 2020. This time, it might even be musical ... Shhhh, though, it's a secret!

What: You can catch me live on the full band Wild White Horses UK tour starting this December / January —tickets on sale now at my website! www.heatherfindlay.co.uk

Wear a Secret Sari Dress and get in free!

Where: www.heatherfindlay.co.uk | https://www.secretprojects.org/collections/she-rocks-secret-sari-dress-collection

When: Available now!

Why: The time for the sacred feminine to rise is right now. This will manifest in a plethora of ways, and it is already happening. Now is the time to stand in your power and rise. The idea here is not for women to rise over men. The planet requires balance only. #balanceforbetter

MIRANDA LAMBERT

PERFORMED A SMALL INTIMATE SHOW AT EXIT/IN IN NASHVILLE IN SEPTEMBER PRIOR TO THE RELEASE OF HER NEW ALBUM *WILDCARD*

Photos by Alan Poizner

NEW HOLIDAY MUSIC
RELEASES TO GET YOU IN THE SPIRIT!

Janet Devlin is ready to spread some holiday cheer this season with her EP, *December Daze*, where she covers holiday classics such as "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," Joni Mitchell's "River," and "Silent Night." The EP also displays Janet's songwriting skills with the title track, and the infectiously catchy, "Happy Holidays." Whether you're already a fan of Janet's music or looking for some new holiday tunes this season, *December Daze* has something for everyone on your list.

Brandy Clark released her rendition of The Carpenter's "Merry Christmas, Darling" featuring Charlie Worsham.

Lena Stone joins a long list of artists to pay tribute to Joni Mitchell covering her classic Holiday hit "River," and she does it with style and grace in her simplistic interpretation with her angelic vocals accompanied with the piano.

"'River' is the perfect holiday release for me—it's not a song people typically think of this time of year, but it's always been a Christmas song to me. Joni Mitchell is one of my biggest inspirations, and to cover one of her songs felt like a challenge, but a challenge that I was up for," expressed Stone. "My producer Dave Pittenger and I decided to keep the production simple, just like Joni's version, with only piano and a lead vocal."

Moya's "You're My Christmas Wish" flawlessly blends the warmth of love and holiday cheer into a danceable and joyful anthem for the most festive time of the year.

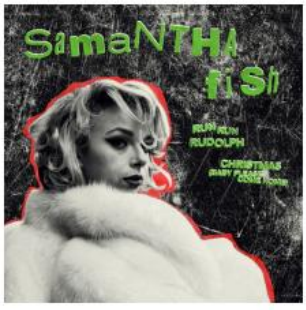
Temecula Road released a special Holiday song, "Christmas in Dixie" this month. Temecula Road is comprised of sisters Emma and Maddie Salute, and longtime friend Dawson Anderson.

"My favorite part of the Christmas season has always been the music, so I'm surprised it took me this long to put out a Christmas record," says Lockwood. "What listeners will hear is a completely different side to me; a more gentle and vulnerable one. I hope they love it."

From "Carol of the Bells" and "What Child is This" to "All I Want for Christmas" and "Jingle Bell Rock," Stirling brings joy with her versions of everyone's favorites in her new holiday release, *Warmer In The Winter.*

Samantha Fish's new recordings of "Run Run Rudolph" and "Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)" pay loving tribute to two of her favorite holiday tunes.

'Run Run Rudolph' is always such an upbeat song, we thought it would be cool to dip it in some noir," laughs Fish. "I think it gave it a unique character that's different from everything out there. I chose 'Christmas (Baby Please Come Home)' because of my love for all things '60s soul. It's the biggest rock 'n' roll Christmas song ever, and being a Darlene Love fan, I wanted a chance to put my heart and soul into it."



Tenille Townes releases a two-song EP *Songs For Christmas* with "Chestnuts Roasting on an Open Fire" and "One In A Million."

Singer-songwriter Brynn Elliott is celebrating the season with the release of two brand-new holiday-themed songs. The original holiday themed track "Walking In The Snow" - written by Brynn Elliott and co-written/produced by Daniel Tashian (Album Of The Year, Kacey Musgraves) - and also "River" – written by Joni Mitchell – are available via Big Yellow Dog Music/Atlantic Records at all DSPs and streaming services.

About "Walking In The Snow," Brynn shares that "writing this song was one of the most fun songwriting experiences I've ever had. I got to write this with Daniel Tashian, who has a very joyful approach to songwriting, which made it a very natural process. The song expresses the feeling of wanting to stand in awe of the beauty of season alongside the person you love." About covering "River" by Joni Mitchell, Brynn says "I think many people, myself included, feel this sense of longing particularly during the holidays - somehow during this season our desires are brought to the forefront as we close out the year. In the same moment we can feel the immense beauty of the season and a hope that things could be better than they are. I'm so drawn to Joni's approach to music, and I feel that this Christmas song so beautifully expresses the depths of human longing."

Blue Élan Records in partnership with the Alliance for Children's Rights released new music this Christmas season with seven of their female artists at the label. This year's releases feature seven songs from the strong female contingency at the record label; **Chelsea Williams, Roan Yellowthorn, Car Astor, Scout Durwood, Amy Wilcox**, the ladies of **Mustangs of the West**, and **Cindy Alexander** have all given their take to some classic holiday tunes.

The goal, to bring awareness to a shared vision in which all children have safe, permanent families with the support they need to thrive. The Alliance provides services to impoverished, abused, and neglected young people; providing free legal services, advocacy, and programs that create pathways to jobs and access to education. The Alliance levels the playing field and ensures that children who experience foster care are able to fulfill their potential.

IN MEMORIAM

Atlanta-based blues guitarist Beverly "Guitar" Watkins passed away on October 1, 2019 due to complications following a stroke. She was 80 years old. Watkins was best known for her Jimmy Hendrix style of playing throwing her guitar over her head and hitting every note. She played for several bands throughout her earlier career and also worked with artists like James Brown, B.B. King, and Ray Charles, but it wasn't until the age of 60 that she released her first album.

Emily Meixell, longtime employee of the C.F. Martin & Co., Inc. factory in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, passed away on July 31, 2019. She had worked in various positions at Martin, most recently in the Custom Shop. We had the chance to meet and interview Emily in 2018, and she told us, "I've been in different departments all over Martin, and now I landed in the Custom Shop and that's where my heart is." She was 36 years old.

Photo courtesy of Martin Guitar

Kim Shattuck, lead singer, guitarist, and songwriter for the Muffs, passed away on October 2, 2019 following a two-year long battle with ALS. She was 56 years old. Shattuck also performed in the bands The Pandoras, The Beards, and the Pixies.

Photo by Don Williams

2020 SHE ROCK AWARDS HONOREES ANNOUNCED

Gloria Gaynor, Linda Perry, Lzzy Hale, and Suzi Quatro among first to be announced...more to follow!

Top row L to R: Gloria Gaynor, Linda Perry, Lzzy Hale, Suzi Quatro, Beatie Wolfe
Bottom row L to R: Myrna Sislen, Judy Schaefer, Suzanne D'Addario Brouder, Ebonie Smith, Tara Low
PHOTO CREDITS: Beatie Wolf – Ross Harris; Linda Perry – Angela Izzo; Suzi Quatro – Tina K

The **Women's International Music Network** (the WiMN), has announced their honorees for the **2020 She Rocks Awards**. The Eighth Annual She Rocks Awards Paying will be held on Friday, January 17, 2020, at the House of Blues in Anaheim, California, during the NAMM Show.

This annual show pays tribute to the women in the music industry and includes an evening full of live music performances, celebrity appearance, fabulous items available through silent auction, amazing gift bags, dinner, and so much more.

The event is open to the public, so no NAMM badge required to attend. For more information and tickets, go to **www.sherocksawards.com**.

The 2020 She Rocks Awards recipients include:

- **Gloria Gaynor**, GRAMMY® Award-winning artist, GRAMMY Hall of Fame inductee, and the legendary voice behind the iconic hit "I Will Survive"
- **Linda Perry**, GRAMMY, Golden Globe, Critic's Choice-nominated artist, Songwriter Hall of Fame inductee, multi-platinum producer and former frontwoman for 4 Non Blondes
- **Lzzy Hale**, GRAMMY Award-winning artist/songwriter and frontwoman for Halestorm
- **Suzi Quatro**, pioneering bass player, singer, musician and actress who played the role of Leather Tuscadero on *Happy Days*
- **Beatie Wolfe**, Singer-songwriter, pioneer of immersive music formats, UN Women role model
- **Suzanne D'Addario Brouder**, Executive Director of the D'Addario Foundation
- **Tara Low**, Music-based entrepreneur and editor and founder of Guitar Girl Magazine
- **Myrna Sislen**, Owner of Middle C Music in D.C., classical guitarist, philanthropist, former music professor
- **Judy Schaefer**, Marketing Director at PRS Guitars
- **Ebonie Smith**, Founder and President of Gender Amplified, Inc, and Atlantic Records audio engineer and producer

This year's opening performers will be Japanese act **D_Drive**, hosted by Marshall Amplification. Consisting of Seiji and Yuki on guitar, Toshi on bass and Chiiko on drums, they play high energy, instrumental rock music with a combination of jaw-dropping guitars and a fireball rhythm section delivering a unique sound.

"We're ready to kick off 2020 in a big way, and our upcoming honorees are an exciting part of that," says The WiMN founder **Laura B. Whitmore**. "These women go above and beyond in their respective corners of our industry and are perfect examples of why we are proud to celebrate women in music."

Additional honorees and featured guests will be announced soon.

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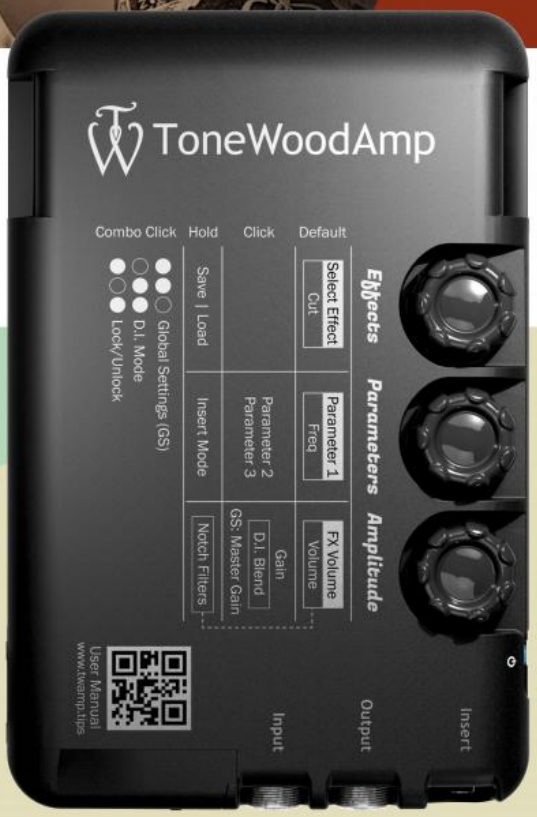

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MEMORABLE MOMENTS AT AMERICANAFEST 2019

Photos courtesy of Americana Music Association

Bonnie Raitt and Sheryl Crow perform onstage during a special event hosted by Spotify and AmericanaFest at Cannery Ballroom on September 10, 2019 in Nashville, Tennessee. (Photo by John Shearer/ Getty Images for Spotify)

Turning the Tables panel with Ann Powers, Maria Muldaur, Carlene Carter, Shawn Colvin, and Amythyst Kiah
Photo by GGM

Elizabeth Cook and Tanya Tucker
Photo by GGM

Yola's sightings at AMERICANAFEST included performances at the awards ceremony, at City Winery where she brought down the house, on the General Jackson Showboat, and a one-on-one interview with Chris Shiflett of *Walking The Floor* podcast.

Yola received four nominations for the 62nd Grammy Awards including Best New Artist and three nominations in the Roots category including Best American Roots Song, Best American Roots Performance (for "Faraway Look") and Best Americana Album for *Walk Through Fire*. She's heading out on a massive tour in 2020, so check to see if she's be coming to a town near you. Also, joining her on some of her tour dates is Americana artist Amythyst Kiah featured in this edition.

Tanya's Takeover
Tanya Tucker had her first hit at the age of 13 in 1972 with the single "Delta Dawn." The country music star has 25 studio albums under her belt, multiple awards, and a list of Grammy nominations including upcoming nominations for her newest album, *While I'm Livin'* produced by Brandi Carlile. The album is up for Best Country Album with the single "Bring My Flowers Now" up for Song of the Year, Best Country Solo Performance, and Best Country Song.

Tanya was another artist very visible at this year's AMERICANAFEST with multiple performances at various venues throughout Nashville. Not only performing and appearing at the awards ceremony to honor the producer of her new album, Tucker held a one-on-one interview with Elizabeth Cook, host of Sirius XM's Outlaw Country channel's show *Apron Strings*, at the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. During the interview, Tucker discussed her career, working with Carlile, and even delighted fans with performing "Bring My Flowers Now." Goosebumps!

Turning the Tables
Another outstanding event held in partnership with the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum, was the "Turning The Tables" session.

Educational panels, special events, and over 700 performances by iconic musicians across generations, as well as rising talent, was enjoyed by over 50,000 attendees, as estimated by The Americana Music Association.

A few standout memorable moments for GGM from this year's event:

Sheryl Crow & Friends
Sheryl Crow kicked off the week at the Cannery Ballroom with 'Sheryl Crow & Friends' performing some of her classic hits a well as songs from her new album *Threads*. Her 11th studio album, Crow has said *Threads* will possibly be her final album. What a treat to have her joined on stage by Bonnie Raitt and Jade Bird.

Brandi Carlile: Breaking Barriers
Grammy-award winning artist Brandi Carlile is a name we have all come to know in recent years, but this was her biggest year yet at AMERICANAFEST. She received three Grammy awards this past February for Best Americana Album (*By The Way, I Forgive You*), Best American Roots Song ("The Joke"), and Best American Roots Performance ("The Joke").

Bringing home the Artist of the Year trophy at the 18th Annual Americana Honors & Awards, she was up against some very talented artists — Kacey Musgraves, Mavis Staples, and Rhiannon Giddens. Not only an award recipient, she sat on a panel with Tracey Gerson of Change the Conversation to discuss the inequality of representation of women in the music industry and steps to take to not only "change the conversation," but to see results. And that begins with her own actions. She also discussed producing Tanya Tucker's new album, *While I'm Livin'*, as well as working with the Secret Sisters on their new album.

It was recently announced that Carlile will be honored with the coveted Trailblazer award by *Billboard* at their annual Women In Music event taking place December 12 at L.A.'s Hollywood Palladium.

The Year of Yola
The Queen of Country Soul, Yola has had a tremendously successful year. The British artist released her debut album *Walk Through Fire* in February to critical acclaim. The album was produced by Black Keys' Dan Auerbach's Easy Eye Sound label.

Amythyst Kiah

Francesco Turrisi and Rhiannon Giddens

I'm With Her

Erin Rae

Moderated by NPR Music's Ann Powers, attendees heard from Maria Muldaur, Carlene Carter, Shawn Colvin, and Amythyst Kiah as these artists spoke of their musical influences. Muldaur was celebrating her birthday that day and discussed being inspired by Bessie Smith and Memphis Minnie, and her beginning in music with Victoria Spivey. Carter shared stories of the Carter Family, Colvin shared a funny story about getting love advice from Joni Mitchell, and Kiah was on the panel representing the future of music. Each performed a song, but the icing on the cake was Carlene Carter singing "Foggy Mountain Top."

Shawn Colvin: *Steady On*

Speaking of Shawn Colvin, her album *Steady On* is celebrating its 30-year anniversary this year, and she performed the entire album at the City Winery. In 1991, *Steady On* won a Grammy for Best Contemporary Folk Album.

Shawn Colvin at the War Memorial Auditorium

Jade Bird

Jade Bird: Breaking Through the Noise

U.K. singer-songwriter Jade Bird sat on a panel this year with Glassnote Records President and Founder, Daniel Glass, to discuss the importance of artist relations and finding the right fit. We spoke with Bird after the panel to get her advice for aspiring female musicians. She said, "Make sure you know your boundaries 100 percent because you should never feel intimidated by anyone. You never want to have a conversation you don't want to have. When you don't feel comfortable, you are totally within your right to leave a conversation. Also, be aware of what you want to say and clarify that as much as possible before anybody gets involved so no one can manipulate you."

Our Native Daughters

Songs of Our Native Daughters artists Rhiannon Giddens and Amythyst Kiah both had standout moments this year. Both performed at the awards show, sat on panels, and Giddens joined Kiah onstage during her showcase at The Station Inn. Giddens and writer John Jeremiah Sullivan held a powerful, moving discussion on the "Erasure of American Music History." As mentioned earlier, Kiah was present at the "Turning The Tables" event discussing her influences and background in music.

WMOT & NPR at the War Memorial Auditorium

Performances hosted by NPR Music, World Café, and WMOT were held at the War Memorial Auditorium. The intimate setting and beautiful architecture of the auditorium created a wonderful backdrop for these performances.

Della Mae at the War Memorial Auditorium

Molly Tuttle at the War Memorial Auditorium

Rising Appalachia at the War Memorial Auditorium

Aubrie Sellers at the War Memorial Auditorium

War Memorial Photos by Johnny Giles Muzic City Images

AMYTHYST KIAH

"BLACK MYSELF" IS THE GIFT THAT KEEPS ON GIVING

By Tara Low with contributions by Sarah Johnson

Amythyst Kiah is "an artist to watch" in the Americana scene blending folk, old-time, rock, and blues melodies along with her deep, soaring vocals to make for a truly mesmerizing and engaging performance. She brings timeless songs into a modern light, as well as creating her own unique songs and sound.

Beginning life in Chattanooga, Kiah relocated to Johnson City, Tennessee, and studied at East Tennessee State University. It was at college that she took an American folk music class and found her passion for old-time music. She quickly changed her major from information technology to traditional and old-time music and dove into a performing and songwriting career shortly after graduation.

Photo by Anna Hedges

Kiah released a debut album *Dig* in 2013 followed up by *Amythyst Kiah & Her Chest of Glass* EP in 2016. This year, she was part of the historic and groundbreaking Smithsonian Folkways Recordings project, *Songs of Our Native Daughters*. The album is a collaboration of Rhiannon Giddens, Leyla McCalla, Allison Russell, and Kiah, highlighting the plight of African American women during the times of slavery. The album has received great success and garnered a nomination for Duo/Group of the Year at the 2019 Americana Music Honors and Awards. The opening track of the album, "Black Myself" was written by Kiah. As of this month, *Songs of Our Native Daughters* was nominated for "International Album of the Year" by the Americana Music Association UK, nominated for Best Duo/Group at the Americana Music Awards in Nashville, TN, and "Black Myself" was nominated for a GRAMMY for Best American Folk Song.

I was fortunate enough to meet Amythyst at last year's AMERICANAFEST and then see her again this year's festival. We followed-up afterward to catch up on her life, music, and aspirations for the future.

It was great to see you again at AMERICANAFEST this year, and at the "Turning the Tables" panel. Can you tell us what it was like for you to be on stage with such iconic artists as Maria Muldaur, Shawn Colvin, and Carlene Carter?

I had only ever heard of Shawn Colvin. I grew up in the '90s, so I remember her huge hit that she had. I wasn't particularly intimate with any of their other artists' music. Still, to listen to their backgrounds and their journeys as women and as artists, and then listening to the women that they looked up to, it was remarkable to hear their stories. And then to find out it was Carlene Carter from the Carter Family! I studied old-time music at East Tennessee State University, and I've played a lot of the Carter Family songs. So to hear her sing "Foggy Mountain Top," I wanted to badly grab my guitar and start playing and singing with her! The amazing commonality between all of them was that music continues to drive everything that they do.

And then for Ann Powers to place me on the panel as the future in music — which is no pressure, I guess! I'm just out here, trying to make it. I have a conceptual idea of things and my place in the world, but for me to hear and see people older than me continuing to love doing what they do was just so was inspiring for me because I honestly can't imagine — I know the word retirement exists — still, I could never see myself not writing or doing something in music, whether it be writing or touring or whatever.

"'Black Myself'" is the gift that keeps on giving."

I was able to make it to your performance at the Station Inn. It's always a treat to see you perform, and then you had Rhiannon Giddens, and Allison Russell joined you where you performed one of the songs you wrote on *Songs of Our Native Daughters*, "Black Myself."

It was a cool moment. I was actually surprised when we got the final mix back for the record, and Rhiannon said, "'Black Myself' is going to be the first song on the record." And I was like, "Really?" And then at the Americana Awards, I was told that. "We're going to open the ceremony with 'Black Myself.'" It's just like "Black Myself" is the gift that keeps on giving in certain respects.

How did you approach writing that song?

It's totally outside of the scope of what I had been writing insofar as how specific and direct and socially conscious it was. Typically, I tend to write in such a way where the content in the song is immediately a universal, relatable human condition kind of thing. That's usually my favorite way to write because if it gets too specific, then some people may not be able to directly relate to it.

When I talk about "Black Myself," I try to preface it with this goes beyond being a song about black people in America. It goes beyond that. It's an American story, a shared trauma that black and white people share. Standing on someone's neck to

keep them down and you can uplift yourself, that is an abusive relationship, and it negatively impacts everyone involved. The line "Black Myself" came from the same version of "John Henry" that was used to write "Polly Ann's Hammer." One of the lines in the song was, "I don't want no red-black woman, black myself." That black myself just kept going through my head — black myself, black myself.
My goal was to say as much as I can within a music structure that when you first hear it, you're like, "Hell, yeah, this is some rock. Southern rock, blues, gospel. I'm into it." You're nodding your head, you're dancing, and then, I come with this really important message while you're also rocking out. That's always been my favorite kind of music; music that feels good when you hear it, and maybe even the first time through, you don't even realize what the person's singing about. Create a mood that felt good and then on top of that, also delivers a message, but then also deliver it in a way that it still fits with the groove of the song.

How about the recording process for the song?
It's always fun because, for me, as a solo artist, I write a lot of songs by myself, and I perform them by myself, and I develop the guitar style to support what I'm doing in a way that is interesting from song to song. I work really hard to get it to be that way. So anytime I play a song and there are other musicians around, it's always cool to hear what they pull out of what I've written or what I've played on the guitar and then add other layers to it. It's a moment where you can see part of something that becomes a little bit bigger than yourself, which is always a humbling experience to have.

How impressive to be part of the *Songs of Our Native Daughters* album, which, in my opinion, is a musical legacy.
There are some things in life that you don't anticipate, like how or when things will happen. The Carolina Chocolate Drops, for me, was a big influence in my desire to study roots music in college, and so for me to be able to work with Rhiannon was a dream come true.
It has been such an honor to be a part of history through this project, or through other things that all of us are doing in various capacities, to be able to bring this attention to stories of unsung heroes. And to be able to allow people to see that there's so much more to music and culture than what we've been advertised or told over the past several decades. It's such a beautiful time right now in music because we're now in the position where we're understanding that this is what happened. Now we are getting more and more information about what happened, why, and what can we can do now to make a path forward as artists.

Can you tell us about your educational background, and when you first got you involved in music?
My parents bought me a guitar when I was 13, and I was into a lot of alternative music at the time. That's the kind of stuff I was learning, and I was learning by ear. By the time I was in my early 20s, I had stumbled into traditional music just based out of curiosity. In an academic setting, I could study music that is taught the way that I learn, which is by ear. So that was really attractive to me. As time when on, I took an American folk music class, which was really interesting. A lot of this style of music, the content of the songs and the singers and players, have these interesting little idiosyncrasies that I like in alternative music — it's this weirdness and uniqueness to the music as opposed to doing some sort of cookie-cutter run of the mill kind of thing. Everybody brings their own weirdness.
So for me, roots music was very much something — that came before commercial music, so nobody was necessarily trying to impress anyone or trying to sell records. They were just playing their music. You get this very raw sort of unpretentious vocal styles and playing styles. I thought that was fascinating and I saw a lot of connections between those two. Then to come to see that the very beginnings of American music helped inform all the other forms of alternative music that I like, that was a powerful moment for me, and it helped my development as a songwriter and performer, being able to connect all of that.
From there I played in school bands for several years. I got my feet wet performing. Then people started asking me to come and sing and play at different events. It became this slow build into a solo career. Then the past five or six years, I've been playing with a group of guys back home and sort of exploring the electric rock and blues kind of side of myself. Then I'm also able to explore these other sides, which my new record is going to have. I'm going to be exploring a lot of different new sounds sonically with mixing my alternative rock and roots music worlds and combining them.

What was your progression of instruments? You play acoustic guitar and banjo. Which came first?
The guitar came first. I've been playing for 19 years. Banjo I started playing back in 2009, 2010. So it's been about nine or ten years. What attracted me to the banjo was the nature of the instrument and also that it came from West Africa. Also, the clawhammer banjo style because you can play melody and rhythm, and I'm a very rhythmic player. I love the sound, and I love the texture you can get with it.

"I've just always loved the sound of a Martin."

What brand of instruments do you like to play?
Right now, I have a Schecter Corsair guitar, which I love. They're known more for their 7-string and metal guitars, but they make this really sweet semi-hollowbody guitar that sounds great for playing blues or really playing whatever. I've been playing a Martin Mahogany D-09 for the past several years. That's my main guitar. I got introduced to Martin Guitar when I was in college, and I just loved the sound. I've just always loved the sound of a Martin.

What is it that you look for in an instrument in terms of tone and playability?
I like guitars that have some warmth about them, not to mid-rangey. With acoustic guitars, like with my Martin D-09, I like that there's a little bit of resonance to it. And then with electric guitars, I like humbuckers. I've really love humbucker pickups. I've messed around with single coils, and they sound great, and I love to hear people play single coil guitars, but for me, the sound that I really like is something that's got a little bit beefier tone and has that low end on it.

Based on your experience and what you've gone through so far, what's the best piece of advice you could give to a young girl wanting to get into music?
I would say that if you have parents that are super supportive of you wanting to play, cherish it, and hang on to that. I've been very fortunate to have my father help me every step of the way with my music career. It is also important to have a good supportive, loving network that believes in what you do. When I was growing up, there weren't any girls rock camps or anything like that. So a lot of my music was done alone in my room, so by the time in my early 20s I started playing with other people, it was a culture shock, and somewhat terrifying. Obviously, you need time to yourself where you can work on technique and practice, but please, please, please there are now opportunities for girls and kids to be able to interact with other kid musicians and teachers that are encouraging. So please seek that out. That is super important. If you have an opportunity to meet other kids that are playing music at rock camps for kids, or at these different Girls Rock Camp Chapters all over the country, or wherever. It's really important for that social element because it's very easy to isolate yourself, especially if you're an introvert. I'm an introverted person, and I was shy and introverted. That's a double whammy!

How did you overcome that as you seem so confident now?
It took a lot of work. If you'd met me about 12 years ago, I'm almost not even the same person. It took a lot of emotional work, a lot of relearning and unpacking things. I think the earlier that a kid can learn to overcome shyness, in any way, regardless of if you're extroverted or introverted, the better. Find a community where everybody supports one another. That is very important because no one is an island. I can't stress it enough.

You're on the road a lot traveling, and I saw you're going to be joining Yola in 2020!
Yes, I'm so excited. I met her in 2014 in Perth, Scotland, at the Southern Fried Festival, directed by my now UK agent, Andy Shearer. We were there to do this Dolly Parton night. It was all women. Samantha Crain was there. Della Mae was the house band. It was an absolutely amazing night. I've played in Bristol, her hometown, and we've hung out. She's so amazing. Everything that she's getting now is so well deserved, and I'm so happy for her because she's an incredible singer and songwriter, and a genuine, amazing human being. I'm just so excited to know that she wanted me to join her on some of her tour runs. I've always wanted to do some shows with her, but I never knew in what capacity, so I'm really excited to be part of it.
I plan to have it released either late spring or early summer.

The Jorgensens'

Brianna Jorgensen on Life, Love, and Truth Through Music

By Alison Richter

From an early age, **Brianna Jorgensen** had a goal: she "wanted to play music forever." The decision isn't surprising — her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother played piano, likewise her brother and sister, and at age 3, the Minnesota native began taking lessons. "I was lucky to have parents who, when I expressed an interest in music, somehow found a way to get me involved," she says. "I will always be super-grateful for that."

Piano taught her technique and memorization. In sixth grade, she took up the violin at school, furthering her studies of classical music, despite already being enamored of jazz, blues, and even ragtime. Through the violin, she discovered and fell in love with bluegrass, and took lessons with master fiddler Brian Wicklund, founder of the American Fiddle Method and frontman for progressive bluegrass band Barley Jacks.

In her early teens, she found her father's acoustic guitar and taught herself basic chords, immersing herself in his vast CD collection — everything from Heart to Bob Seger to Steely Dan, who remains her favorite band. From there, she added vocals and songwriting and began working with local musicians.

While playing in rock bands, performing cover songs and originals in local clubs, she was approached with an offer to join a variety group, which kept her on the road for a year and a half, honing her craft and earning a living. But she yearned to perform original material and so returned home to Minnesota, where she joined another band and continued writing songs.

It was during that time, in 2014, that her mother discovered the Kurt Jorgensen Band and determined that her daughter should accompany her to a gig and speak with the bandleader. At that point, Brianna was in the formative stages of a solo project; Jorgensen, a musician, songwriter, arranger, and producer with eight albums and numerous Minnesota Music Awards to his credit, suggested they meet to discuss her goals. They began working on the album that became *Wandering*, and eventually, a professional relationship became a personal one. "We were working together, started writing together, came up with songs together," she says, "and in doing that … you fall in love, get married, have a baby, and tour the country!"

That is, of course, a highly condensed version of the hours spent working on an album that led to what became The Jorgensens and their debut, *Love Wins*. The husband-and-wife duo recently released their second album, *The Lexington Stretch*, but don't be fooled by photos of them seated calmly with acoustic guitars. While they are no strangers to a nice ballad, their music is an energetic mix of blues, rock, and jazz, and onstage — playing over 200 shows a year — both sing and play guitar, Brianna plays piano, and they're accompanied by a full band: Andra Suchy - backup vocals, Matt Hertel – drums, Brenda Lee King – bass, C Harris – percussion, Jeff King – saxophones and clarinet, and Jeff Levine – trumpet.

The band was on break between tour dates when Brianna Jorgensen spoke to *Guitar Girl*.

The collection of songs on this album work perfectly together, but they are stylistically different. How do you make it make sense when you're in the planning stages of an album?
It's hard to say that we have a process and we stick to it because we don't. When we were writing this album, Kurt and I were traveling a lot and spending a lot of time in the South, in New Orleans, and we were inspired by it. We probably had seventeen songs written for this album, and these ten just made sense because they have some type of Southern flair, and we wanted to keep a common thread going through it. With that came "If The Sea Was Whiskey," the Willie Dixon song because it finally made sense for Kurt to have it on an album, and his version of it is really, really good.
There are times when we have a blank sheet of paper, and we say, "Let's write a song together," and times when we're off in our own little corners, writing, and we come together and help complete each other's songs. This album happened more like that. It was a team effort on all counts.

Obviously, sequencing was very important. How many lists did you create, or did it all come together easily?
It's so strange now with things like iTunes, where you can just buy a single. That's OK, but there is an art to putting the songs together. Whether you're basing it off of what keys sound good next to one another, or maybe lyrically, or you're basing it on the overall feel, there are so many elements that go into that. It's challenging because of where we're at today, with people just buying singles, or just streaming music, and not ever owning the album. You're like, "Does it even matter?" But, as an artist, you have this collection, and you're like, "It matters. It matters."
It's hard not to get caught up in doing what you think people will want you to do. You want to capture their attention spans, which are so short right now, and when you kick off the album, you only have ten seconds to make them want to listen further. So there were times when we thought "Unchained" would open because it's powerful. Then we said, "Maybe it's 'Voodoo,' because that opening guitar line is mysterious."
Then I said, "What if we broke it up into an intro, middle, and end, as if we were presenting it in a performance without any stops?" So we decided on "Whiskey." Once we had that, "Chocolate and Coffee Blues" was a no-brainer for a closing number with a jazzy, smoky feel. Once we had the beginning and end, it was easy to fill in the middle and make it flow.

Which guitars did you use in the studio?
I used my go-to, my baby, a Martin CEO-7. It's a 00 style. I'm a smaller-framed woman, and it's a small enough guitar that I can hug it and draw the tone out of it. For me, that's really important, and I didn't realize that until about two years ago.
When I first started playing guitar, I found a Yamaha guitar in my dad's closet and taught myself some stuff on that. But when I really got serious about guitar, I bought a Gibson J-200, based on the fact that it looked kick-ass. That guitar is so cool, and it's huge. It was the wrong mix, and I ended up trading it. I got a smaller guitar, which suits me way better. My playing is so much better, and my tone is better because I have control over my instrument. When you're young, you don't realize how important that is. So in the studio, I use my Martin. I like to play sitting down, and we mic the fretboard up by the neck, and then we usually put another mic off to the side by the soundhole.
But each song is different, and it depends on the sound we're going for. "Voodoo" is a great example where the acoustic guitar is the meat and bones. It's everything for that song. So we wanted it to be … not in your face, but just present enough. There are so many instruments on that song that float in and out, and it needed something very stable, very solid, and very warm. I always am a sucker for a warm tone, but with clarity. That's really important, especially for an acoustic, if it's going to be a lead instrument holding down the song.
I don't play a lot of electric guitar in the studio, but for the next album, that's something I'm going to take a stab at. I do play electric, but mainly rhythm. I play through a Fender Blues Junior. It's a small amp, and it sounds amazing. I like a cleaner, warm tone. I don't use any pedals, just straight in. My main guitar is an American Strat. I love it. My dad recently built me a custom Tele, and I do love that one too. It's a beautiful guitar.

What are your preferred recording techniques?
We use a pair of Neumann KM 184 mics and Telefunkens. We really, really like those European microphones; they just sound spectacular. We always do acoustic instruments in stereo, which is great, because once you're mixing and that sound is bouncing back and forth from left to right, it's so much fun to listen through headphones. It feels so real like you're in the room with the instruments being played.
Kurt and I don't use Pro Tools. Some people are freaked out about that when they come and record with us. We use a Tascam 24-track digital recorder, so every take is as-is. If you mess up, you have to do it again. There is zero cutting and pasting. There's no, "We'll fix it in a program." We don't run anything through a computer. It's just straight into this Tascam. We like being organic about our recording process. It's about the performance and capturing what you're trying to portray in the song.
Maybe you hit a bad note, or maybe something rings out strange, or maybe you sing a note flat, but your performance was great. I'm always of the opinion of keeping it if it sounds good. So we try to keep it as real as possible. There are no plugins; there's no nothing. It's the amp and the guitar.

How long have you had your Martin?
I've had it since 2015. I knew my Gibson was not right for me, so I was shopping around. When I picked it up, it instantly felt so much better in my hands. It allows me to really work the strings, and I can draw out the tone. I'd never felt that before with an instrument. It's a beautiful guitar, with solid mahogany back and sides, and the top is Adirondack spruce, so it's got beautiful overtones and such a big, warm sound. I love it, and I feel like it's a part of me. I do enjoy playing electric guitar, but that Martin —it's my sidekick.

To back up, Kurt had recorded eight albums by the time you met, and you had done a lot of touring but no recording. Why not?
At the time I met Kurt, I was in an original band that was playing folk-rock music. It was a fun project that I stayed with for a couple of years. But, again, I wanted to create something. I met Kurt, we got together, and he was kind and never made me feel "less than" or foolish, or like I didn't know what I was doing. We sat in his living room, I played him some of my original songs, and he wanted to know why I wasn't playing them in public. I told him I didn't know how, and he said, "Let's work on that."
We became fast friends, and we did my solo album together. He helped produce and arrange the songs. When that came to a close, it became clear that we needed to take both our projects and make it one project. When I found a partner in crime like that in Kurt, who understood what I wanted to do, things moved fast. We put out my solo album. We had all this material; we recorded *Love Wins*, and all of a sudden, we had tons of gigs.

Is that album still available?
It's not. With all that's going on around our new release, I should put it on iTunes. It's called *Wandering*, and it sold about 500 copies locally, so it's floating around. It's so neat, as you perform with your band, how songs shift and become different songs almost. That's happened with a lot of my songs off of that solo album. We do some of them live, and they become different songs than what's on the album, so we've been thinking about putting one or two on the next album because they really found their spot.

You're already thinking about the next album?
We are chomping at the bit to get the next album going. This album took us a couple of years to record. We were playing a lot, we moved, we had a baby — there was a lot in between there. So we're hoping that next fall we'll have the release of a brand new album. Luckily, between the two of us, we've got enough inspiration and material to have another album already in the works.

A couple of closing questions of a personal nature, if that's OK. The reason for this is to speak directly to our readers, young women and young people who perhaps aspire to work in the music industry or who may be dealing with difficult situations. The first question: Do you have some words of wisdom for those who want to get into this business?
My words of wisdom are stay true to yourself. There were times when I got pulled this way and that way, and you lose yourself. Every time you do that, you backtrack, and you have to get back to who you are and what you want to be, and then push forward. So stay true to who you are. And it seems so simple, but don't give up. It takes so much time to hone your craft and be good. Just good. And once you're good, you got to be great, and then you've got to be excellent. So you just can't give up.

The other question: There's a quote from you in the bio: "We saw one another through some tough times … I was getting sober." Are you comfortable talking about that? Again, as something that may resonate with some readers and possibly help someone.
Absolutely. It's monumental for me to be sober and doing this. Not only does it allow me to be in the moment, every single moment, whether it's a happy moment, stressful moment, an unsure moment, but also the clarity that comes with sobriety, with business decisions and creative decisions.
We've all talked to that person, or heard that person

who we maybe admired, say, "I get inspiration when I smoke pot. I'm so creative when I snort a line of coke. I go to another level." I bought into that in a big way, and I was a mess. Drinking was never my thing. I was into smoking pot, using coke, a huge Adderall taker, and I lost my way. I thought when I got sober that I maybe wouldn't be creative anymore, because some people tell you that, and I thought, "Oh my God, I'll never write another song."

It's inspiring to me, and shocking to me, that three albums later, here I am still sober, only getting better at what I'm doing. I finally respect myself and love myself, and that's huge for me. And it's huge in decision-making. Like I said, just the clarity that comes with it. I feel comfortable in the decisions I make, and I don't ever have to be like, "Ugh, I wonder what happened the night before." I feel so solid and grounded, and that's been a blessing for me.

How long did it take? What were your steps? Admitting there's a problem and asking for help, whatever that can be — addiction, eating disorder, depression, anything — admitting there's a problem and asking for help are two very different things and two very difficult things.

Oh yeah, very difficult. Quite frankly, I didn't know I had a problem, and I was absolutely stunned and felt betrayed when people brought it up to me. So it took me some time to accept that I needed help. I'm so lucky I never hit a rock bottom that was an overdose situation or serving a jail time situation. I didn't have to lose it all to be saved, and I'm really grateful.

My loved ones brought it to my attention, and I was really angry, and I felt betrayed. I felt foolish more than anything, now that I'm here to look back on it. I felt so disappointed in myself that "This is recreational. How am I doing this every day all of a sudden? This is crazy. How did I get here?"

I didn't go to inpatient rehab, and I wish I would have because there they teach you tools on how to cope with life because life continues after you get sober and things aren't easy. You use, in most cases, to forget your problems. I did private counseling, worked with a woman who was really great, I saw her a lot, and I started going to AA. Having that fellowship and people there who … you see yourself in everyone who's in that community, and it keeps you sober. And talking about it helps.

For so long, I was really ashamed of it. My first year of sobriety was absolute hell because I didn't talk about it. I isolated myself. I just thought, "I'm going to be tough, and I'm going to do this to prove to the people who love me that I can do this." I wasn't doing it for myself. And then something changed in me, and I thought, "Oh gosh, I've been sober now for a year, I'm not as angry, I feel pretty good, and I'm still creative. Why am I sober right now?" And I thought, "I'm sober for me. Obviously, I want this if I'm continuing this." When I made that decision, my real recovery began.

I don't think any person on this earth gets through without some type of hardship. I went through some tough times. Being able to work through that instead of suppressing my feelings — I worked through it sober, and the freedom you can feel is amazing. I would say if anyone's struggling with substance abuse of any kind — or, like you said, depression, eating disorder, no matter what it is — there are so many people just like you who want to talk to you, who have recovered, and who have the tools to get you to the other side of this thing.

Photo provided courtesy of artist

TONE TALK WITH *MEAN MARY*

Photo by Johnny Giles

Mean Mary (Mary James) could read music before she could read words and wrote original songs at age 5. By age 7, she was proficient on vocals, guitar, banjo, and violin, and her life became one long road-show of festivals, venues, TV, radio, and film.

Today, Mary plays 11 instruments, tours internationally, and has over 50k subscribers and 15 million views on her YouTube videos. She is also an award-winning musician, songwriter, and book author. Deering Banjos named her their Goodtime Ambassador, and Janet Deering describes her playing as giving her "chills."

Cold is her newest release. The album features intimate, almost gothic songs with some lyrics taken straight from her journal entries. When not on tour, Mary is in her studio creating — songs, albums, videos, and books. Currently, she's embracing her rock 'n' roll side by creating an album that features her and her band, Mean Mary and the Contrarys. This will mark her 17th album since her first original release when she was 6 years old.

What is your definition of tone, and how has it changed over the years?

Tone is like lipstick on a pig or a beautiful woman. It won't help the pig, but it can change our perception of the beautiful woman. If you play horribly but with great tone, it's still going to be pretty horrible. If you play an awesome blues solo and you smear purple lipstick and green eye shadow all over it, it might not sound quite so much like an awesome blues solo. Ultimately, the music decides the tone.

As someone who's played acoustically most of their career, it's hard for me not to crave the tone of the natural-sounding instrument. I always look for warmth and resonance first and then layer whatever else I want on top of that. I'm not a heavy distortion player. I'm more about clarity, but it really depends on the song. I'm currently recording a new album that requires me to experiment more than I ever have before.

Which banjos, guitars, amps, and pedals are you currently using and why?

When I play acoustically, my main instruments (guitar and banjo) are a Guild D-50CE and Deering Goodtime Midnight Special. I run them through LR Baggs Para DIs to keep them warm sounding. When I'm playing electric, it's usually the semi-hollow body Guild Starfire V and Deering Electric Crossfire. I have an AB switch on my pedalboard and run them both through the same amp. Lately, I've been using a Roland JC-40 combo amp. It has a nice clean tone. I use a BOSS Compression and Ibanez Tube Screamer to fatten things up a little. My go-to pedal for fun on both the guitar and the banjo is the Ibanez Weeping Demon Wah Pedal.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?

I record in my own studio, so I have the freedom to play around and try out ideas — that's important to me. I must have choices, so I try a million different things until I feel I've done the best I can musically for that song. I do try to keep things as natural as possible in the studio and as close to how it will sound when I play it live on stage.

How do you keep your sound consistent onstage?

Honestly, it's not always consistent. I'm a working indie musician and the venues are completely different from show to show. Sometimes I'm a slave to the venue and their equipment and sound engineer. All I can do is bring everything that I need to capture my sound and then just communicate with the sound engineer. My philosophy is to treat the sound engineer like your best friend and cross your fingers on the rest.

What does your practice consist of?

I rarely find time to practice off stage anymore. I think this is true with a lot of musicians that are touring full-time. My main practice time is when I'm writing a new song. When I have a new song, I spend time with it, work out ideas, and play it over and over. That's practice! The rest of the time it's just staying in shape by playing in front of an audience.

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?

Love what you do. Everyone that starts playing an instrument has the fire of music inside them or they wouldn't be drawn to it to begin with. I think we should remember that fire when we make music. Forget about your heroes or any other musician out there that you think might be more experienced. Just play from your heart. We are all unique.

BRIANNA MUSCO

Using classical guitar to create pop/rock melodies

By Alexx Calise

Photo by Justin Dushawn

I recently had a chance to chat with New Jersey-based singer-songwriter, **Brianna Musco**, a raven-haired rocker who has just released a new single, "Ringling" from her debut EP called *The Demo*. The title is a bit of a misnomer, however, as *The Demo* is extraordinarily polished, showcases Musco's impressive guitar chops (she's a lifelong classical guitarist), and features heartfelt, diary-like lyrics that hark back to some of the early-2000s era singer-songwriters like Michelle Branch or Vanessa Carlton. Read on to learn more about this multifaceted artist, who, in addition to her own original music, puts a unique spin on popular hits from Katy Perry, Taylor Swift, and more.

You released your debut EP earlier this year. How long have you been writing and performing music? It seems you're quite seasoned despite this being your very first solo release.
I have been playing guitar my whole life and graduated with a degree in classical guitar performance. I began writing these songs last summer and wanted to produce them in a way that sounded both fun and professional.

You're also a retired Division I soccer player for Delaware State University. That's very impressive. What position did you play? Did your decision to pursue music prompt you to leave the sport?
Yes. I played striker, usually on the left, because I am a lefty. I studied music while attending Del State and, unfortunately, was injured in our last game. We still won the game, which is all that matters. I actually used to bring a travel guitar with me on the bus so I could practice during the road trips.

You also studied classical guitar while there and at Monmouth University. How does your classical training come into play when you're writing for your solo project, which is more on the pop/rock side?
I find that the classical background helps me create melodies and bass lines. After creating certain parts or phrases, I usually add other instrumentation to give it the pop/rock feel. My favorite artists are Taylor Swift, Stevie Nicks, and Paramore, so you can definitely hear some of their influences in my music.

You've done quite a bit of touring. Do you self-book all of your own tours these days? When you play, is it a combo of originals and covers?
Touring is arguably one of the best parts of being a musician. We have a few different bookers that we have used, and I typically book the New Jersey shows. I like to make sure our hometown shows are easily accessible and on Friday/Saturday nights to maximize engagement and draw.

Which track is your favorite from *The Demo* to perform live?
Definitely, "Heaven." I wrote it for my Grandma, and every night when we get to it in the set, it makes me smile.

You're a big fan of performing covers and have done some artful ones of Taylor Swift, Ed Sheeran, and more. In particular, I really liked your classical guitar playing in "Look What You Made Me Do." It gave it a whole new flavor. Would you say performing covers like these is a good way of pulling in new fans?
I really enjoy creating covers to give my own interpretation of a song that spoke to me. I will be posting more covers this fall showcasing both my guitar playing and vocals.

When it comes to pedals and effects, are you a big fan of them, or are you a bit more minimalistic when it comes to achieving your desired tone?
My background in classical guitar has limited me when it comes to pedals, as well as my bank account! But I personally use a tube screamer or blues driver, a VOX wah, and a delay pedal. The PolyTune is my best friend on stage as well. I like certain pedals for certain flavors in each song. I don't try to overdo it, but I am very interested in specific tones and timbres.

When is the next EP coming out?
Great question. We have a few singles coming out this fall/winter and a winter tour. Depending on how the writing process goes, I am hoping to have the follow-up project out in the spring of 2020.

Brooke White

"WE CAN ALL GET TOGETHER DOWN IN CALICO"

By Tara Low with contributions by Sarah Johnson

Brooke White, previous *American Idol* finalist, has made country music history releasing her new album *Calico*. A Nashville country-style album written, recorded, and produced entirely in California, *Calico* embodies the rising of contemporary country music – a style which stretches traditional country music norms blending elements of pop and rock music with Laurel Canyon folk. Speaking recently to *Guitar Girl*, White described her new album as being somewhat a reflection of herself – free-spirited and fun, but still capable of communicating deeper issues of importance.

Beginning life in Arizona, Brooke White developed a passion for music at a young age, learning to play piano and guitar. At the age of 19, she left her hometown for Los Angeles, where she spent several years pursuing a career in music, while working as a nanny. She received her breakthrough in 2008 when she appeared as a contestant on *American Idol*, performing in front of millions of weekly viewers. She stole the hearts of many American families with her pure, sincere personality and stunning performances, which showcased her vast vocal range and her living-room-style of playing the piano. After finishing in the top five, Brooke set her hopes on a career as a songwriter. White has since released several solo albums, as well as three EPs and several singles as part of the duo Jack and White, featuring Jack Matranga.

Calico, short for California country, is White's fifth full-length solo album. Featuring a variety of different songs, from the toe-tapping 'Calico' and 'Boots' to the heart-warming 'Movies,' White's new album is earnest and sweet – focusing on her love for the community of California. Joining with pop songwriters Chris Qualls and Eric Straube, White wrote and recorded *Calico* in Straube's home studio over a year, with the same spirit that is reflected throughout – laid-back country-style vibes that speak of a place where "there ain't no rules and anything goes." They even had animals in the studio, as White shared with us that some of the songs were recorded while she had Straube's cat in her arms and a pug named Phoebe on her lap. She also described writing a country album out of California to be freeing creatively, as they weren't bound to any formulas or generic patterns but were free to explore whatever sounds they wished to create.

Photo by Kat Bouchart

What led you to record a country album in California?
I had two young children and I was still nursing one and walking the other to kindergarten. It just became clear to me, "you're not going to Nashville." "If you're going to make a record, you're going to make it here. You're going to make it while you're in the trenches of motherhood." I ended up calling Eric for help, and I said that I wanted to make a country record. He wanted to write with me, and so we started writing. I felt like we were starting to create something. I was feeling confident that making the record in California was going to work. I let go of my expectations to make a proper country record in Nashville where country music is usually made.

I think it's better that you made it where you did, as it highlights aspects of California which I think will resonate with many people. What do you think?
I feel like there's no doubt in my mind, this is where I was supposed to be to make this record and it worked out perfect. There would have been no *Calico* had we not done it here. The California country concept wouldn't have been. I'm not the first to make California country, but I am the first to make country records in California, in the fashion that we did. I'm so thankful we did because it allowed me the space to be experimental and to draw from references that matter to me, such as the artists and places that I mention in the songs. I've lived here for 16 years, and I've made my home here and have developed some strong roots in this place. I just think that the energy is thick, and the magic and history are full of legends and people who have made an enormous mark on me, musically, and California.

Is the overall theme of the album like the song 'Pioneer' autobiographical? Was it about you leaving Arizona and moving to California?
There are some very autobiographical moments in the songs, but not in all of them. Some are not about me — like "Honey." But I would say the moments that are really about me leaving Arizona, like "Pioneer," was hard for me to write because I love Arizona and I love my family and I didn't want to hurt anyone. Writing that song, I had in mind that I don't want my Arizona people to feel like I don't miss Arizona or still love it, because I do. But there was this point in my life where I felt so drawn to come to California and I knew that it was just something I needed to do. I knew that it was the place I needed to be, to become the person I wanted to.

When you started writing, did you know what direction you wanted the album to go in?
No, I didn't. It did surprise me that I didn't end up playing a single lick of piano on this record. I think people often recognize me on the piano although I did play the guitar quite a bit on *American Idol*, and my last record has some guitar moments. However, some of the things that I was writing on the piano just did not feel

right for this record. I would sit down, and then I'd come into the studio with the guys, and it just didn't feel like the sound for right now. Another thing I didn't anticipate is those autobiographical moments. There's a lot of lightness to the whole album in addition to some deeper themes. The song "Weigh Me Down" gets into a bit of a moodier place, acknowledging those places of fear, and those emotions that are difficult, and can keep us stuck. But I feel like there are so many really fun moments. I feel as if I am now in a place in my life where I'm letting go a little bit and just enjoying having fun. It was kind of a surprise to me that this record turned out as fun as it did. But I'm also kind of not surprised because that is genuinely what I am like in my everyday life. I enjoy being a free spirit, but I do also love to think about things that matter.

Is this the first time you have ever written with Chris and Eric?
No, it isn't. I do have a history with them. My band Jack and White, (with Jack Matranga), were set up on a writing date with them, back in 2013 or 2014, and we hit it off with them right away. Jack and I wrote with Chris and Eric, and we started writing Tuesday nights together. We had our own little Tuesday night music club and we would write together and eat snacks and order Little Caesar's Pizza. We loved it. Then Jack and I were working on a record, and we wrote the song "Lost" with those guys. It was a great song. I've always felt musical chemistry with them. However, they are more pop-leaning and so my first thought was, "I'm going to go make a country record with Chris and Eric?" I think that was kind of what made it fun.
Having written with them before, I had confidence in our ability to write music together and that we were all open enough to see where it would go. I had confidence that I was working with people who have a good sense of who I am, and that I could be honest in the process of writing with them and that they would honor what I wanted, but still, be pushed and challenged by them.

Their pop influences came through in it too, which blends well.
It's a part of what I do every time — I love a pop song. I love a strong hook and I love a melody that you can remember quickly. I'm not a super-cool hipster indie artist that makes music that's just cool. I can't, it's not me. I grew up listening to the most iconic pop music ever. Pop songs and melodies that are strong, despite whatever the instrumentation was. At the heart of every song is just writing a really good song. Then how you make it sound, you add things, and you add these elements that make it whole. If you listen to "Weigh Me Down," in the beginning, we have this beat. It is the driving force of the song, and then I started hearing this mood and so we added the instrumentation which makes it sound like a country song.

When did you start playing guitar?
I started playing piano at 7, and guitar at 16, almost 17 years old, and I'm fairly self-taught. I had one friend who sat me down and taught me how to play "Wonderful Tonight" by Eric Clapton. That was the first song I learned how to play. I started with the classics, luckily, it's not too hard. Well, not the strumming part anyway, but that was the first song I could play, and it just opened up a whole new world. Honestly, from what I love to listen to, the guitar is my favorite instrument. I always say my goal, someday, is to be able to play "I Can't Tell You Why" by the Eagles and be able to nail that solo.
But you know a guitar player came in. We call him Keg. He is an exceptional guitar player and it was really important to me that guitar play such a front and center roll in this record, and that there were prominent parts, and that was the voice. You know in today's music, you don't hear guitar solos anymore. The guitar is important but it's not like the '70s or the '80s where the guitar was shredding everybody's faces and playing such a prominent role in music. For me, with this record, I wanted that. Keg came and played all the leads on it and it was such a blast to be in the studio with him and have him lay down those. We had a pedal steel player too who is exceptional. His name is Rich Hinman. To be able to stand up and play guitar more on this record is a new challenge that I am excited about. I'm so excited to approach this whole record from the guitar because it allows me to expand as an artist and get outside of my comfort zone at the piano which is a little easier for me.

What was the songwriting process?
We wrote everything together. One time, I was on the way to the studio and it was raining, and so I started with raindrops falling on my windshield. It just came out, really fast. I sang it into my phone recorder on the way there. I couldn't play guitar while I was driving, but I got there and said, "Hand me a guitar." Then I started coming out with the chords. I am always writing everything simultaneously, with the music and the lyrics at the same time. When one thing comes separate from the other, it's very difficult for me to see it through to the end.

Was it just yourself, Chris, and Eric doing the songwriting?
Yes. We did everything and the only thing we brought in was pedal steel and electric, and Kevin also played some banjo and a little bit of mandolin. I love the touch of banjo — it makes such a sweet sound. Everything was in this little room with just the three of us.

How long was the process from start to end?
We started in January, somewhere between the tenth and the twentieth, I can't remember. We finished mastering on December 20th of 2018. It took a year from start to finish.

Do you have any plans for touring?
I don't have any nailed-down plans. We are definitely in the phase of working it out. With the music coming out, we just need to reach all the people that we can and that makes touring a higher probability. We did a show at the Hotel Café in Hollywood on the day before the record came out. I think I could see myself doing some more shows soon. And then expanding upon that as the record keeps moving. It gets hard with me having children though. Part of the reason I didn't chase after the big label is that I'm a mom. I have two children that are young and they're only going to be little once. I'm choosing to do both at the same time, and it's really hard.
But for a couple of weeks, I would love to do that for this record. Playing this record live with the band is exhilarating. And like I said, this is the first record that is so fun, it has so much energy and to play it live with the band is unlike any show I've done before. And that's the kind of setting that it needs to be. I hope that it does get a chance to be played for an audience that can enjoy it in a live setting.

What was the significance of the hats on the "Calico" video?
I think it represents a couple of things for me. One, that I am in a phase of my life where I am wearing many hats. I am wearing all the hats, and I love all my hats. All of them are meaningful, make me who I am, and makes my music what it is. But in the music video for "Calico," I also wanted to incorporate hats in terms of community. Where people would act like we can all just get along together. I didn't get here alone. I didn't do this all by myself. I'm independent but I have many people in my life who've influenced me and helped me. I feel like the exchange of hats is a nod to that. Even to artists who I've never even met but have influenced me here in California.

What type and brand of guitars do you like to play?
I have a couple of guitars. The very first guitar I ever bought with my own money was a Taylor Big Baby and I still love that guitar. It's worn and still sounds great. But then after the show, I was really lucky to get a guitar from Gibson. As soon as I picked up a Songwriter, I knew it was the one. I've been playing on a Songwriter ever since. It's my acoustic guitar of choice. The Gibson Songwriter is the prettiest, most glorious sounding guitar that I have. I have a little Martin for traveling, and my husband got me a Tele for my birthday. I've been playing that for a couple of years. And then I have this funny yellow Epiphone electric guitar that I found dirt-cheap, and it needs some work. I need to replace some of the pickups and stuff. It's perfect for "Calico."

Based on everything you've been through in your career, what advice would you offer to a young artist wanting to pursue a career in the music industry?
I would say just hang on. I think something that I realized is that it's never going to be perfect. There's no perfect scenario. People often think that certain things like finding a major label will make it all work out. But in reality, what determines if it works out or not is you. Pursuing this has broken my heart on several occasions, but I kept coming back for more because I love it. So I would say if you're going to do this, you need to ask yourself if you love it enough? Everyone figures out pretty fast that it's not particularly glamorous. It's typically grueling, hard work and then you have these moments where you do find the magic in the music and that's what keeps you going. You know, it's like boots – go to work for it, put your boots on. That's what I'd tell them. Put your boots on.

***Calico* tracklist:**

1. Calico
2. Honey
3. Boots
4. Pioneer
5. Into The Trees
6. Weigh Me Down
7. Back Pocket
8. The Night We Met
9. Disco Moon
10. Be Good
11. You
12. Movies

The 70s Telecaster® Deluxe in Mocha.

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A Revealing Conversation with Inspiring Singer, Songwriter, and Musician

Dayna Manning

By Victoria Shaffer

Photo by Dave Brosha

It's near impossible to describe **Dayna Manning** in a few brief adjectives, as her professional resume includes singer, songwriter, musician, producer, engineer, lecturer, and author. Fueled with a passion for music and her community, Manning's career represents her values while demonstrating the power behind unity and supporting those who have supported you. With a new album and memoir on the horizon, Manning briefed *Guitar Girl Magazine* on her past influences, experience as a producer and engineer, upcoming projects, and so much more.

With such a vast and extensive résumé of accomplishments in the music industry, what was it that inspired you to become a musician? How old were you at that time?
Honestly, I feel like I simply followed the path in front of me. Both of my parents are accomplished musicians, on trumpet and clarinet, and music was always there for me to explore. I played piano and sang in front of people from a young age, as if it was a normal thing that everyone did. I took guitar lessons with my father at 13 and have never looked back.

What female artists have inspired you and your style of songwriting/playing?
Sarah Slean, Maureen Ennis, Ariana Gillis, Loreena McKennitt, Bonnie Dobson, Laura Marling, Sheryl Crow, and Joni Mitchell.

Is there a specific brand of instrument you prefer to use when performing/recording?
I play McConville Guitars. They're built by Michael McConville in my hometown of Stratford. Michael is who taught me how to play guitar.

Following six years in the major label music industry, you decided to release your 2006 *Folkyo* album independently. What inspired this decision, and how do you feel it impacted the overall creation of that album, as well as your music moving forward?
I saw myself as a musical entrepreneur. This made me learn more skills so I could work more independently. I learned how to record

> The book is in chronological order of when I wrote the songs. It shows great insight into what it's been like to be a songwriter in Canada over the past two and a half decades.

myself around that time and took design courses so I could work on my own gig posters, etc. It allowed me to think less commercially when I was writing and speak from my heart even more.

Your Canadian folk trio, Trent Severn, released contemporary songs about the nation's people and places in a humorous and loving manner. How did this group take shape? How is writing for this group different from that of your solo work?

It was a natural progression for me. I was already writing songs in these themes. I felt Trent Severn did a really great job of trying to give rural Ontario a focused cultural identity, and I had a lot of fun playing with the other members of the band.

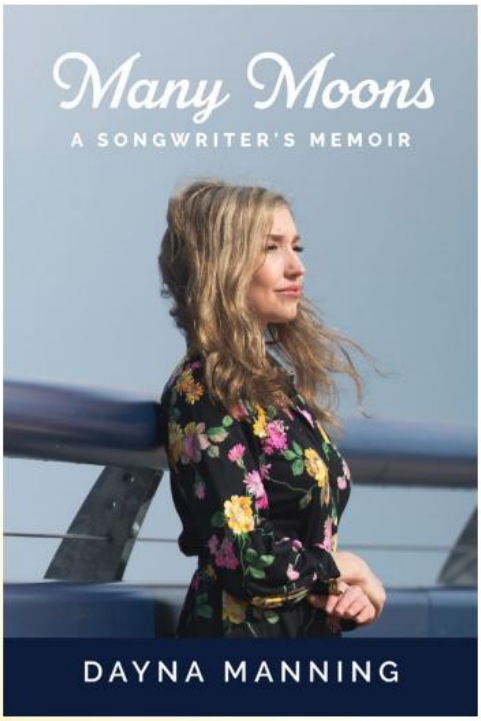
Along with playing and songwriting, you have many credits as producer and engineer. When did you begin taking on these roles, and how did you decide whether to produce/engineer your own music?

I co-produced and engineered my solo album *Folkyo* in 2006, then co-produced the Trent Severn debut album in 2011. I then took the full rains as producer/engineer on Trent Severn's last two albums *Trillium* (2015) and *Portage* (2017.) These decisions were often budget-driven, but also because I really enjoyed the process. There was time to experiment with both these albums, which allowed me to learn along the way.

On my forthcoming album, *Morning Light*, I had the budget to hire a great engineer, so my role was producer. Sonically, I feel this made a huge difference. I feel it's important to have experts focused on one task. My engineer, John "Beetle" Bailey, is one of Canada's most acclaimed audio engineers. The sonic presence of the album benefits greatly from his skill and hard work.

You have a lot of experience with lecturing on the process of writing and recording at places such as the OIART recording school, as well as mentor experience through your Folk Army program. Why do you feel this sort of work is important?

I decided in 2016 that I wanted music to be my whole life. I wanted to be playing, teaching, or creating every single day. This meant looking at a bigger picture way I could be involved with nurturing music and the creative spirit in my community. Community music is a priority for me. I want other young girls to be raised thinking that communicating through music is a perfectly natural, normal thing. I also felt I lived through a period where community music was de-prioritized, and I wanted to be a part of fixing that. My musical world has nothing to do with a hit song or competitive singing shows. I always hope to show other people how to truly surround themselves with and share through music.



You've got a new record. Tell us about *Morning Light*.

Morning Light was released on October 25, 2019. The album is my first foray into the genre of Chamber-Folk. It's a very folk-based record featuring my voice, guitar, and banjo, accompanied by Ben Bolt-Martin on cello, Andrew Chung on violin, Derek Conrod on French horn, and Laura Chambers on flute. The album is whimsically arranged by the cello player and Stratford Festival alumnus Ben Bolt-Martin. There are seven of my original songs, three traditional folk songs, and a Joni Mitchell cover. The record was made in my hometown of Stratford, Ontario, and features almost exclusively members of my community in every role. I really wanted to capture the cultural sound of my community.

You've also got a new book called *Many Moons* that was released in November. Could you delve a bit into the writing process and what exactly this book will entail?

Many Moons is a memoir told through my songs. Each chapter is titled after one of my songs, starts with the lyrics, then tells the story of that song. Whether an adventure inspired a song, or a song inspired an adventure, it's always fun to connect the dots. I can almost always trace an important event in my life back to writing a song, and I wanted to share these tales with my followers and peers. The book is in chronological order of when I wrote the songs. It shows great insight into what it's been like to be a songwriter in Canada over the past two and a half decades.

Tracklist

1. Charlie Lake
2. King of the Background
3. The Same Way
4. You You You
5. Free Man in Paris
6. When I Love You
7. The Weaver
8. The Bonny Banks of the Virgie, O
9. Peter Amberley
10. I Get Closer
11. O Snow
12. Reflections

EMISUNSHINE

BRAVING THE BATTLEFIELD

By Alex Windsor

Photo by Alan Messer

While many songwriters are conscious of the issues we face today, not many of them can put them into songs as eloquently as **EmiSunshine**. Born and raised in a musical household, Emi knew early on that she had a lot to say, and she knew how she wanted to say it. Her new album, *Family Wars*, touches on the difficult reality that some of us are faced with: mass murder, political corruption, domestic violence – hardly the subject matter for teenagers. Although the context may be heavy, the album still has an optimistic tone. Her voice is both powerful and sweet as it soars over the various plucked strings from the band. In a world filled with darkness, EmiSunshine is here to be the light.

Your music has been in the spotlight since you were very young. How do you think your sound has evolved over the years?
Well, I think finding new artists who inspire me has altered my course. Each time I find someone I love, I see a new piece of the puzzle come to life. The songs I wrote early on are more simplistic than the ones on my new album because of all the artists who I've grown from.

Apart from your musical family, did you have any major influences growing up?
Sure, for me, it was watching other artists perform and believing I could do that. I went to lots of live concerts and watched documentaries about music. There was constantly music in the house. Artists like Marty Stuart, Dolly Parton, and Buddy Miller really were my go-to artists early on.

Is there a specific songwriting process that you follow?
Each write is different. If I'm writing with just me and Mom, it's laid back and easy. Nashville writes are fast and furious, and depending on the writers, it can be spot-on or hit-or-miss. For instance, writing with Jim Lauderdale for my new album was way different than writing with Fish Fisher. Jim is polished and shiny, and the song we wrote together, "There's Got To Be More," came out smooth and uplifting. Fish is a little more chaotic, and the process of writing with him is filled with mayhem. So, yeah, it's different depending on the company you keep.

The lyrical content of your music taps into some important issues. Where do you get your inspiration from?
The world around me, the media, people-watching, eavesdropping. I'm a pretty serious person, so my songs reflect that. For example, the song "Family Wars" was inspired by listening to a few conversations in the mall. I overheard one conversation in a restaurant where somebody was talking about a child they were worried about, who was on drugs. Another song on my album, "Oh, Caroline," came from an idea I got while riding in the car down a dark, lonesome road.

What gear (guitars, amps, accessories, etc.) are you currently using right now, and why?
I got a new Fender Mustang I'm really excited about! It's tobacco-burst. I am in love with it. I use a Fishman amp, and I use a Canyon and a Blues pedal. I play both a Fender Paramount Acoustic and a Wayne Henderson acoustic, both of which I adore. I'm a guitar and ukulele fanatic. I love gear.

What was the most exciting part of writing and recording your new album?
Writing, in general, was just a blast. Kyle Jacobs, Vicky McGehee, and Autumn McEntire all brought new sounds to my music. I've written with Fish Fisher and Mama (Alisha Hamilton) forever, so we have a particular groove we go for, but for this round, we expanded that pretty far! Recording with the legendary Tony Brown producing, I just learned so much. Now I really want to explore producing more! He's just the gold standard to learn from! Plus, my engineer, Troy Dixon, is so perceptive and by now, knows exactly what I want. I love recording!

What was the most challenging part of writing and recording your new album?
I guess it all boils down to money. We recorded "Family Wars" in three days, mixed it in three days, and mastered it in less than that. We are always trying to conserve money and live in a budget; not be wasteful, you know. That was a major challenge, but the lack of free time during the writing was the kicker, too. You can only take so many days off the road as an independent band. So, I write when I can, as much as I can. It's not like working though, it's like living, and I love every aspect of it.

Is there a specific sound or tone that you try to achieve while onstage? While recording?
Sure, I know what I like and what my ears want to hear. I have what they say is perfect pitch, and with that comes a bit of a challenge. I know what I want, and if there is a day when things don't line up, sound crews that don't understand or amps that don't cooperate or pedals and cables that fail, then I'm all distracted in what I need to produce and what I can produce at that time. I'm a little OCD, so my band knows to stick to the program! (lol) Still, I'm a sucker for a fiddle, and if we have a fiddle player for the night, I might lose myself in his tone and have to really concentrate on my guitar playing. I'm a finger picker, so I want clean tone. Sometimes it's there, and when it is, I'm super happy.

Family Wars
Label: Little Blackbird Records
Released: October 18, 201)
Artist: EmiSunshine and The Rain

Tracklist

1. Family Wars
2. There's Got to Be More
3. Scarecrow
4. Oh, Caroline
5. Crimson Moon
6. Jonas Black
7. Politicians Dance
8. Same Boat
9. The Ghost of Hank Williams
10. Meanwhile In America
11. Jonas Black, feat. The McCrary Sisters (bonus track)

MADDIE Poppe

It's been a "Whirlwind" of a year

By Alex Windsor

It's no wonder why the supremely talented **Maddie Poppe** was declared the winner of Season 16 of *American Idol*: her radiant voice, straightforward storytelling, and heart-on-sleeve presence was sure to captivate audiences around the country. Before achieving stardom, the Iowa native got her start at a young age singing classic hits with her dad's band. Within a year of picking up the guitar, she began performing locally and making a name for herself. By the time she started high school, she was fully immersed in songwriting and drew inspiration from such artists as Sara Bareilles and Ingrid Michaelson.

Her first album, titled *Songs from the Basement*, was written and recorded with her father in 2016 – one year before dominating the *American Idol* stage. In her new instantly charming album *Whirlwind*, the multi-instrumentalist who plays guitar, piano, and ukulele chronicles her amazing journey through unforgettable melodies and cultivated songcraft. She pours her emotions into lyrical ideas that are then neatly wrapped in elements of Americana, indie-rock, and pop. With a fearless passion and a skilled team of producers at her side, it is safe to say we've only seen the beginning of Maddie Poppe.

How did your musical journey begin?
Growing up, music was always in the family. My dad was in country and bluegrass bands and would occasionally ask me to come up and sing with him and his band. When I first got a guitar in third grade, I found it super complex and frustrating and put it down after a few days. It wasn't until I was 14 that I once again found an interest in playing guitar. I only wanted to learn one song, but ended up learning about 100. I slowly started playing my own shows locally and haven't put down the guitar since.

Who were some of your earliest influences?
Some of my earliest influences that I can remember were Anna Nalick and Kelly Clarkson. I remember having their CDs on repeat in my portable CD player during any car ride when I was younger.

In what ways do you think you have grown from your time on *American Idol*?
I think I have experimented with many more sounds, some of which I was really scared to try at first. I think sometimes the things we are most afraid or nervous to try are the things that end up being the best things for us.

Tell us about your new album, *Whirlwind*. What was the writing process like for you?
It was an absolute whirlwind, which I why I named the album that. I was in so many different rooms with countless writers, producers, and musicians almost daily, pretty much wearing my emotions on my sleeve in order to write a worthwhile and meaningful song.

Photo by Shervin Lainez

Your single "Made You Miss" is a catchy power anthem dripping in blues rock. What was your inspiration for that track?
I actually did not write too much on that song. I added a few things to the bridge, but other than that, the song was pretty well put together before I even showed up. They didn't have anyone to cut the song prior to me, and it just happened to work out for us.

How do you think music has evolved from your first album, *Songs in the Basement*?
I've experimented and opened myself up to so many more genres and sounds that I never thought I would be interested in. It wasn't until I was basically pushed into the discomfort of it that I started to enjoy it.

Let's talk about gear. What are you using these days (guitars, amplifiers, accessories, etc.)?
My go-to accessories that I must have at every performance are at least two light guitar picks —one I keep on my mic stand and the other usually in my pocket if I'm not using it for that particular song. I also like to keep a capo and a tuner at the head of my guitar. My friend also recently made me a quarter inch cable, so that's been nice to travel with as well!

You had a chance to tour with Ingrid Michaelson recently. How was that?
It was such an honor getting to know her and understand her audience. Sharing the same stage with her is something I have dreamt of for so long, so to see it come to fruition was so exciting.

Photo by Shervin Lainez

Before going onstage, do you go through any warm-ups or do anything to "get in the zone"?
It's actually kind of funny, I don't play by too many of the standard "by-the-book" singer/musician rules. On Idol, I would often drink whole milk before performances and as much as it would frustrate my vocal coaches, I would never ever warm up.

What advice do you have for other artists like yourself that want to perform?
I would advise to simply be yourself. As simple and cliché as that may sound, I think one of the most important things to be concerned with is your happiness.

Maddie Poppe performed at the Showbox at the Market in Seattle, WA on October 12, 2019

Photo by Kirk Stauffer

About *Whirlwind*:
Released May 17, 2019
Label: Hollywood Records
Cover artwork: Dylan Meade

In a recent press release, Poppe stated, "Making the album felt like one big experiment, where I kept learning so much and getting so many new ideas," says Poppe. "Instead of just limiting myself to any one genre, I wanted to try out whatever styles and sounds felt right for the song.

On co-writing: "At first I was so scared to lay all my emotions out on the table like that," she recalls. "But now that I've gotten used to it, I don't have that fear anymore. These days I'd much rather write with other people, because I love that feeling of everyone sharing their ideas and creating something you'd never come up with on your own." And as she's evolved as a songwriter, Poppe's made a point of telling her story with soul-baring vulnerability. "Two years ago, I never would've imagined I'd be where I am today," she says. "I never would've thought I'd get out of small-town Iowa and play shows all over the country or meet somebody so perfect for me—I never thought I could make my dreams come true like that. Making this album, I was really honest about everything that's happened in my life during that time. I didn't hold anything back, and I hope that people can feel how real the songs are and connect with each of them in their own individual way."

Tracklist

1. Not Losing You
2. First Aid Kit
3. Nothing Good Comes out of California
4. Wild Flowers
5. Made You Miss
6. Take It out on You
7. Skeletons
8. Postcard from Me
9. Little Things
10. Roses

CARLENE CARTER

BEING A "CARTER GIRL" AND CROSSING GENERATIONS

By Tara Low with contributions from Sarah Johnson

Photo by Russell Baer

Carlene Carter was born into a family of country music royalty. The daughter of country music icons Carl Smith and June Carter, stepdaughter of Johnny Cash, and granddaughter of country music matriarch, Maybelle Carter, Carlene is no novice when it comes to making good old-fashioned country music. While her life has not been without controversy, Carlene has built a successful name for herself. She has released 12 albums and 20 plus singles, received a Grammy nomination for *Best Female Country Vocal Performance* in 1991 for her hit single "I Fell in Love," and has performed in musicals and on television.

Carlene collaborated this year with her stepbrother John Carter Cash to produce their latest album, *The Carter Family – Across Generations*. The album was released in October via Reviver Entertainment Group's Legacy Records and is 13 songs of original recordings of the Carter Family along with recently discovered tapes. *Guitar Girl Magazine* caught up with Carlene in the rush of the album release to discuss her time at AMERICANAFEST, her trio, being a Carter Girl, the new album, and carrying on the Carter Family legacy.

I had the good fortune of seeing you at the "Turning the Tables" event at AMERICANAFEST, where you were on stage with Maria Muldaur, Shawn Colvin, and Amythyst Kiah. What a great event!
That was a really special event for me. I felt really honored to be a part of that. Maria Muldaur still has the pipes — she has not slowed down a bit. I follow her on Instagram, and she is just touring her tail off. I love Shawn Colvin, and I became a fan of Amythyst. She's so soulful.

Besides playing solo, you also play with a trio.
Yes, I usually play alone, but I love my trio. I put together the trio with Chris Casello, who I met 15 years ago when I did the musical *Wildwood Flower – The June Carter Story*. He was the guitar player in the production. He's a firecracker, and I call him Bunny because he doesn't stop moving. It's like a cross between brother and honey. He's an amazing musician. He plays steel guitar, guitar, and dobro — anything with strings on it. And then there's Al Hill. He used to work with Bettye LaVette. His roots are more R&B, but he's having a fun time playing some of the Carter Family music as well as the kind of stuff that I do. We have a really good team, the three of us. We go out, work, and take care of each other. We all get along, and it's great. We just have fun playing. I'd love to get the word around that it's a really good show. We all play different instruments, which makes it interesting, so it's not just one sound throughout the whole night — we swap instruments all the time.

Any recordings of your trio?
Not yet, but we're talking about doing either a live album or going into the studio — I don't know. I would love to record our show. It would be great because so many people ask if we have any recordings of us three together. I think that will be in the cards very soon.

When you were at the 'Turning the Tables' panel, you had some great stories to share. You talked about watching your family perform, and one story you shared was that you remembered when you were 3 ½ years old, you took the microphone and said that you wanted to talk into that. Did you know you always wanted to be a performer?
I knew I wanted to do what they were doing. I didn't even really understand what it was to be a performer because it was my family. As a little kid, I just thought, "that looks like fun." I wasn't like, "I'm going to be a superstar someday." The interesting thing about it was that I got the bug from that, from being a kid and watching them, and wanting to be a "Carter Girl." I wanted to be a little bit like of all of them, which I hope that I somehow managed to carry on a little bit of each of one of them. They raised me — all four of them. Grandma, Momma, Helen, and Anita — that was just the way they did it. I feel fortunate that I had that in my life, that I wasn't raised by a maid or something like that. They passed us girls around, me and Rosie and Lorrie. We were just passed around from one sister or to the other; whoever was pregnant and staying home got us, or Grandma. So that was pretty neat.
My mom was really into acting in New York, and she loved the theatre. She had always wanted to be a musical comedian actress on Broadway, or she wanted to be in movies, which she did do all of those things in a way. She had many different characters that she

> "My whole life has been one big circle."

> Grandma taught me how to do the Carter scratch."

played on stage. She took Rosie and me from a really early age twice a year to New York City to see musicals and go to the big department stores. I grew up watching musicals, so my big ambition was to be a dancer, a singer, an actress, and be funny. That was beyond me, except the funny thing was that I ended up being in two musicals that I did over the years. I was in *Pump Boys and Dinettes* in England in the West End for 13 months — eight shows a week for 13 months! Then I rejoined the Carter Family, I guess, because I was so tired that I needed some stability back here. Then I got to play my mom in a musical which is when I met Chris, which was interesting. You know people say I remind them of my mother.

My whole life has been one big circle where I circle right back to my roots. I go out, and I gather up stuff. I gather up other kinds of music in my soul, and I always come back to my Carter music because that's the most real thing that I've ever known, and it still is. I can make up stuff all day long, but it's always going to have a little Carter in there.

Let's talk about your autoharp. What's the story behind it, and why it's so special to you?

Autoharp was one of the first instruments that I was able to make a pretty chord out of because it is very easy to do that — you press one button, take your finger across the strings, and it sounds fabulous. It was like immediate gratification when I was a child. I never really concentrated on trying to learn how to play it like Grandma. I could always play rhythm on it, but I still don't even profess to be able to play it at all like my grandmother. She amazes me.

Grandma predominantly played Oscar Schmidt autoharps because they were really kind of it at the time. She started getting electric ones, and I got one of her first electric ones when I was young, and I still have it.

But my autoharp is special because it came from Maces Springs, and a man named Mr. George Orthey built it. This autoharp is from a tree that A.P. [Alvin Pleasant Carter] planted when he was a young man. That has made quite a few autoharps for the women in my family. There is a little tiny armrest where your arm goes across to touch the bars to make the chords, and it's in a different color wood; it came from the cabin where my grandfather Ezra and A.P. Ezra were born. Mr. Orthey took some of that wood and harvested that and made the Wildwood Flower design for the autoharp. So I have a little piece of my family with me at all times.

How old were you when you picked up the autoharp?

Oh, I was a little bitty kid. I would be standing at the table, and the autoharp would be sitting on the table. My mom would say, "Press the button, and go like that with your fingers." She would give me a flat pick because it was hard for me to press the bar down. I remember that, so I must have been really little. Later on, I loved holding it — there was something about it. Now I feel much more of a connection to it and enjoy playing it a lot.

What other instruments do you play?

Besides autoharp, I play ukulele, piano, and the guitar. I used to play a little bit of mandolin, but only rhythm.

I like an autoharp that is really loud, and that is not incredibly heavy because when you play a chromatic harp, it's a bit heavier, and yes, it sounds great, but I wanted one that sounded really bright. I can pretty much play in three different keys, so I'm limited a little bit on what songs I can play on. So when someone says, "Can you sing this song?" I say, "What key is it?" It's gotta be in D, C, or G, and it can have some minor chords in it, and then we're okay!

I decided that I was really going to start playing it like I knew what I was doing. I think a big key to becoming a good musician is to be fearless enough to go for it. You might amaze yourself that what you hear in your head, you can actually do with your fingers and your hand. I think people that love music will sit there and practice and practice and practice, which is what I have done all my life. I think I got that from my Aunt Helen, who loved to practice. She always wanted to practice. She used to sit in the dressing room practicing. And it showed because she could play like nobody's business. She played just like Grandma.

I'm trying to delve into the autoharp in a whole new way. I am going to learn at least ten new songs and try to play them like Grandma played them, and that's a big task to take on! I have my own style. I'm a little bit Maybelle-like, but I'm a little more June-like, which is kind of reckless — here we go! Grandma Carter taught me how to do the Carter scratch with a flat pick. I tend to stick with the flat pick style of guitar playing that she taught me to do.

"I used to smart off at people and get myself into trouble."

My kids recently asked me this question, so I thought I would ask you. What advice do you wish you had taken from your parents?

The main advice that I did take was learning how to write a song. Always write your own songs and be authentic. For advice I wished I had taken, don't drink and don't do drugs. Although I do think that that was part of my story and that it had to be part of my life for me to be who I am today, even though it would sure have saved everybody a lot of heartaches if I hadn't ever done it. But then I might not be where I am at right now, so I don't have any regrets about it. But my mom was really adamant about "don't smoke cigarettes, and don't drink, and don't do drugs."

Also, "don't get a big head or be a smart ass." I wish I had taken that a little bit more to heart because when I was in my youth, I would smart off at people and get myself in trouble, and it usually had to do with me thinking that I was all that. I think that is just a normal youth thing, though.

You recently shared a picture of your father, Carl Smith, on Facebook wearing his Country Music Hall of Fame medallion. You said, "I am blown away by that fact, and beyond proud of the legacies I am a part of."

I know! I think I have more people in the Hall of Fame than anyone else. I'm related to five people in there. The original Carter Family, the three of them, and then Daddy and John; so, it's pretty amazing. I really am hoping that they will induct my mom and my aunts — the Carter Sisters. That may be overkill, but they definitely deserve to be acknowledged. Just because Mom was out front because she had the burning ambition and was such a ham, Anita and Helen and Grandma were the backbone of everything. Anita had the most amazing voice, and Helen was so underrated because she was outshined in some ways by them, but she was the glue. She could play every part, knew every part, sing every part, and she could write songs, too.

Let's talk about the new album *The Carter Family - Across Generations*. Tell us about the inspiration behind this album, the recording process, and pulling the family together.

We decided that we were going to pull ourselves together. That was the number one starting point. We all, and when I say we all, I'm talking about all the direct people from the original Carter Family, which is about 30 of us, maybe more. But the core unit was Dale, myself, John Carter, Lorrie, and Mother Maybelle's grandkids because we're all around here, except for Dale Jett — he's up in Virginia, but he definitely needed to be involved in this. We had to all agree that we were going to do this, and we had to all agree on how this was going to work because when you have that many people involved in something that is a legacy that we all share in, we have to have somebody doing the footwork. So between John Carter and me, we started the footwork.

There was a lot of technical stuff to get through. John Carter and the engineers worked hard to make it as authentic as it could be and not sound like we weren't all there together. That was the challenging bit — we wanted it to sound like we were all together, which I think we did. It sounds like we are all there, and we were all enjoying it together. It was eerie for me to play guitar along with my mom playing autoharp or playing along with my Aunt Helen playing guitar — it felt like they were in the other room. That's what made it so special. John Carter did a great job producing this record because it took a lot of attention and time.

He started delving into the archives and finding tapes. He found this reel to reel tape of Sara and Grandma. They used to record on reel to reel tape recorders and send that to each other. Rather than call on the telephone, they would mail these tapes of them talking and playing music back and forth. So at the beginning of that tape, she says 'Hey, Maybelle, ' which I think sounds great. Then Grandma's talking, and she's rambling on a little bit, and you can hear a little noise in the background, and then the song starts.

You do have to have a map to figure out who is on what track and who is singing what verse if you care about that stuff. Or you could just think that this is all of them — they're all on there.

It was fun to put it together — it was like a beautiful mosaic puzzle. It was like finding a broken piece of china and putting all these bits and pieces together. I look at it like when they repair pottery in Japan. They repair it by mending it with gold between the broken bits. That's how I looked at this whole process. It's a beautiful rare piece of china. Something precious and our legacy is that. I have always felt that so much of why this music speaks to people — no matter what generation of us is singing it or what style we're playing it in — is because it is so from the heart and so filled with love. I think that's what comes out in this record. It's also got a lot of soul in it.

"I always come back to my Carter music."

You referred to yourself as a "Carter Girl" at AMERICANAFEST and proclaimed, "I'm a Carter Girl. That's my job, y'all!" What does it mean to you to carry on the Carter Family legacy?
It means that I'm doing what I was asked to do by the people that I love most in the world. All my life, they were my heroes. I know that all of them would be so proud to see all of united and something together and carrying on the music that they made in the last 90 years — it's still going on. As far as I know, we are the only generational family that's gone on this long that sing. This is a huge wonderful gift that I feel I need to care for, and it does mean everything. My life's ambition is to never have a dull moment. And let me tell you, being a Carter girl, you don't have a dull moment.

Being a Carter Girl, and coming from such a long line of Carter Girls, what advice would you give to a young girl wanting to get into the music profession today?
Write your own songs, and if you don't, only use songs you wish you'd written. Keep your own publishing. These are my words of wisdom that I've learned over the years. I'll give you the advice Dolly Parton whispered in my ear when I did my first record. I had my picture taken with her; she said, "Just keep on smiling, honey, no matter what." I have carried that with me. Be yourself, be unique, don't be afraid, and don't try to fit in. Be exactly who you are, and you'll never ever have to fake it.

Tracklist

1. Farther On (Traditional)
2. My Clinch Mountain Home (A.P. Carter)
3. Gold Watch and Chain (A.P. Carter)
4. Worried Man Blues (A.P. Carter)
5. Winding Stream (A.P. Carter)
6. I Never Will Marry (A.P. Carter)
7. Amber Tresses (A.P. Carter)
8. Maybelle (Danny Carter Jones, David Carter Jones)
9. Diamonds in the Rough (A.P. Carter)
10. Don't Forget This Song (A.P. Carter)
11. Foggy Mountain Top (A.P. Carter)
12. Will the Circle Be Unbroken (A.P. Carter)
13. Maybelle's New Tune (Maybelle Carter)

KARLA DAVIS ON HER SOULFUL TONE AND LOVE OF ACOUSTIC GUITARS

By Victoria Shaffer

Photo courtesy of artist

Karla Davis filled *Guitar Girl* in on her admiration and love for acoustic guitars. Davis, who got her start on YouTube, moved to Music City in 2009 to pursue her music career and has since performed on iconic stages such as the Ryman and the Grand Ole Opry. Preparing for an album release is spring of 2020, Davis spoke with GGM about her love for acoustic guitars, how influential Bonnie Raitt has been towards her sound and career, and what performing on some of the worlds most renowned stages has taught her.

With such a vast and extensive résumé of accomplishments in the music industry, what was it that inspired you to become a musician?
I started posting videos on YouTube and realized I was starting to grow a pretty decent fan base. I was contacted by a few writers in Nashville, encouraging me to make the move to music city, that was in 2009. The rest is history!

Which female artists have inspired you and your soulful style of songwriting/playing?
My ultimate inspiration is Bonnie Raitt. It's her soulful voice and style of guitar playing that always seems to bring me back to center. She has made her career exactly what she wanted it to be. She never gave in to commercial pressures, and she continues to sell out her tours. She is a constant source of encouragement for me.

Is there a specific brand of instrument you prefer to use when performing/recording?
I live and breathe Takamine for my live performances. The on-stage electronics are top-notch for live sound. I use Takamine and Bedell in the studio for acoustic needs, with Fender as my go-to for electric purposes.

What is it about the acoustic guitar that resonates with you?
I have always preferred acoustic guitar. I like to hear the intimate tones and movements along the fretboard. I feel that the acoustic guitar works best with my style.

What advice would you give to young women who want to learn how to play the guitar?
I would say try and keep trying, practice and keep practicing, have fun and keep having fun! I still learn something new on guitar every day. Playing guitar makes me feel like my truest self. I hope girls learning to play guitar will allow themselves to fall in love with it in the way that I and so many others have.

What does the song-writing process look like for you? Where do you pull inspiration?
I pull inspiration from a lot of book titles and everyday conversations. I'm always acutely aware of title opportunities in everyday life. It has become a kind of second nature to me at this point.

You've performed on the stages of NBC's *The Voice*, *Late Night with Jimmy Fallon*, the Grand Ole Opry, and the Ryman. What do these experiences mean to you, and what lessons were you able to take from them?
Each of those experiences has made me better, helping me to hone my craft and to better see my strengths and weaknesses. I do get kind of excited at the thought of telling my daughter about some of the stages I've gotten to play on in my lifetime. It's something I'm proud of, and each has taught me something different. For instance, *The Voice* was my ultimate lesson in not letting my nerves get the best of me, while the Ryman taught me to simply take a step back and enjoy every second of an important experience.

You're single, "Wearing Me Out" is such a feel-good track. What inspired that song, and how much fun was it filming the music video?
I love this tune! I wrote this with Gordon Kennedy. It came from a title track idea that I brought into the writing room. Gordon is such a great writer; he was quickly able to craft a melody. We had ourselves a song within an hour or so! The video was a blast. Any time I get to include my dog in a shoot, it's a successful venture. We wanted a feel-good video to match the upbeat tone of the song.

What can fans expect from you in the near future?
I'm writing and recording for a new record right now, hoping to have it released in the spring of 2020.

LINDSEY Stirling

"LIFE IS ABOUT UPLIFTING PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY"

By Alison Richter

Award-winning electronic violinist **Lindsey Stirling** released her highly anticipated fifth studio album, *Artemis*, in September. The thirteen-track album, which features guest vocals from Elle King and Amy Lee, draws inspiration from anime and Greek mythology while focusing on themes of courage and inner strength — personal territory for Stirling, who has openly discussed her battle with depression and journey through the grief process.

"I wanted this album to be a strong concept album," she says. "Artemis is the goddess of the hunt, the protector of virtue, and the goddess of the moon. I felt like there was so much symbolism in what she represents, and I felt like her message was one that everyone can relate to. So not only did I spend a year writing the themes and melodies that I felt represented her, but I simultaneously wrote a comic book that dives in and tells her story. The theme of the comic book is that, like the moon, we can get covered by the shadows of life, but just because you're covered in shadow doesn't mean you're not still there. You can fight to reclaim your full light."

In addition to her music, Stirling is a dancer, artist, author, and motivational speaker. Her path to success began in 2010, when she made it to the quarter-finals on *America's Got Talent*. In 2012, she released her self-titled debut album, now gold-certified. Two years later, *Shatter Me*, also gold, reached the Top 5 on the *Billboard* 200, and in 2016, *Brave Enough* replicated the success. Both albums won Top Dance/Electronic Album at the Billboard Music Awards. Singles "Crystallize" and "Shatter Me," the latter featuring Halestorm's Lzzy Hale, were certified platinum and gold. Her world tours are consistently sold out. Her 2016 memoir, *The Only Pirate at the Party*, co-authored with her sister, Brook Passey, made the *New York Times* bestseller list. The following year, she was a runner-up on the 25th season of *Dancing with the Stars*. This condensed version of her resume only scratches the surface of her accomplishments.

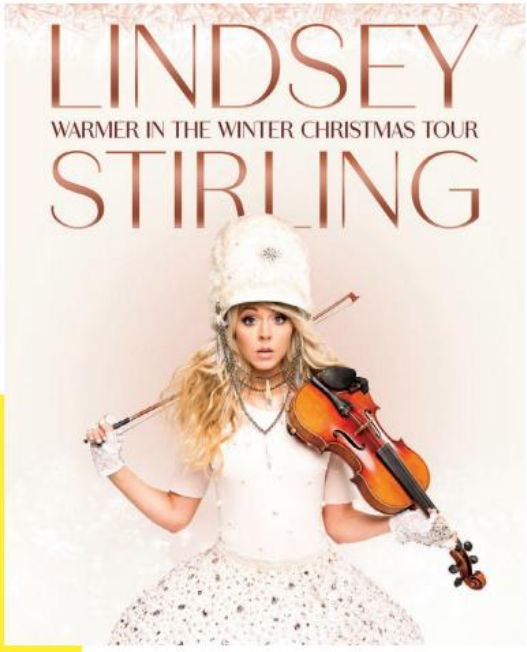
Guitar Girl connected with Lindsey Stirling via e-mail shortly before the start of her world tour.

***Artemis* is your fifth album. When you look at the timeline, from your debut album until now, what do you see?**

In a way, I wanted this album to be a return to the Lindsey that wrote her very first album. Since my first album, I've watched my dreams come true, but along the way, I've learned a lot of rules: How to write a song, how the industry works, what's realistic, what "sells," etc. But in writing this album, I wanted to throw all that away and write music without rules. I also wanted to give myself permission to make wishes and dream big again. And finally, I wanted to stop looking at the numbers but rather focus on the little miracle moments that make me love what I do. Like when one fan tells me my music

Photo by F Scott Schafer

Lindsey Stirling at the Roxy, Hollywood CA on August 27, 2019



From "Carol of the Bells" and "What Child is This" to "All I Want for Christmas" and "Jingle Bell Rock," Stirling brings joy with her versions of everyone's favorites in her new holiday release, *Warmer In The Winter.*

helped them beat depression ... wow, that's when millions of "likes" or thousands of tickets sold don't matter. All that matters is the one person in front of me. Life is about uplifting people individually, and that is something that everyone can do.

Did you have the concept for *Artemis* in mind before you began writing the songs?
When I first started working on the album, I was writing blindly, trying to figure out what to say and what story to tell. I had found out where I was at, but didn't know how to share that. Then, after writing a dozen terrible songs, I finally wrote a song that I LOVED. I was searching for a name that meant "bringer of light" in other languages, and I happened upon the name Artemis. I got so excited and immediately knew that I am Artemis. I think we are all Artemis in our own way — constantly searching to push back the shadows and find our light. Once I found the name, the album came together really quickly.

Musician, songwriter, dancer, artist, author — how do each of these fulfill different sides of your creativity?
I just LOVE the creative process. Even more than a musician, I am a storyteller. I think that is what drives me, and that's what fuels all different art forms. For me, the story and the concept of a song are the foundation; then the music rests on that. Once I have those pieces of the puzzle, then I love bringing them to life through visuals. Making music videos is so fun. I concept out all my music videos, I co-direct them, and I work closely with a stylist to bring the characters to life. Something many people don't know is that I've edited every single video on my YouTube channel. The story happens in the edit.I also creative-direct my tours, but I am so lucky that I work with incredible choreographers, stylists, and tour team that can take my crazy concepts, sketches, and notes, and turn them into realities.

How do you give each of these crafts adequate time and balance?
I definitely compartmentalize the crafts. They are all their own ... until they aren't. Of course, they eventually overlap, but in the beginning, they all have to be given adequate rehearsal and time to be perfected. The best example of this is the dancing mixed with the violin performance. First, I learn the violin music. Then I go to rehearsals with my dancers, and I don't even bring the violin for the first week of learning new choreography. Once I feel like I have the violin parts very well learned and the dancing is memorized, I spend hours on my own, slowly meshing the two skills together. Every time I do this, it feels impossible, and I wonder how I did it in the past, but after hours of rehearsal, these two very, very separate disciplines become one giant muscle memory. They become connected.

In your bio, you state, "I figured out how to make the violin fit me rather than make myself fit the violin." How did you develop your technique to fulfill what you needed from the instrument?
Typically, violinists have played the violin the same way, and they've played the same exact music for hundreds of years. A sheet of paper with a bunch of black dots and squiggles is placed in front of you, and it tells you what to play and exactly how you should express it. This is extremely hard to do, mind you, and I have so, so much respect for classical musicians that I can't even call myself a classical musician anymore. But for me, after years of doing this, I got burnt out. I didn't enjoy it anymore. Then I had the revelation that rather than playing pieces that were hundreds of years old, maybe I should play the music I liked to listen to. I started to play with anyone and everyone who would let me play with them, from rock bands to country artists to hip-hop tracks. I discovered what I actually liked in music and decided to fuse it all together in my own music, and that's what made me write my first songs.

Lindsey Stirling at the Toyota Center in Ontario, CA on November 21, 2019

You also do motivational speaking in your "spare time." The first obvious question is, "What spare time?"
Yes, I keep super, super busy. But there are peaks and valleys in this industry. It's a hard thing for artists to deal with, so people don't usually talk about it. But I'll come off of an intense album cycle full of planning and executing a tour show, doing press, directing and editing music videos, costume designing, etc. Then you go from a solid year and a half of running a million miles an hour to a slower season. It's really jarring. Everyone tells you to go on vacation or enjoy the time and relax, but that induces more anxiety than being overworked for most artists. Suddenly you wonder if you're not relevant anymore, and you can easily go crazy. So I now have passion projects and go-to things that I have waiting for me when I come to these "slow seasons." For example, I love doing motivational speaking.

Why is it important for you to speak to young people about your experiences?
I once felt so alone when I was going through anorexia and depression, and I didn't think that anyone could possibly understand what I was going through. I also felt hopeless. I speak to youth in hopes that I can help them feel like they are not alone in their feelings, and I want to give them tools of how to deal with it, but most importantly, I want them to know there is hope. If I could get through these things, so can they.

Given the remarkable success you've experienced and continue to experience, do you have some words of wisdom for young women, or for any young person, aspiring to work in the music industry?
Two things:

1. Perseverance is the most important word in this business. The people who succeed aren't those that never fell, but rather the ones that fell over and over and over again but got up every single time and got stronger. Don't take "no" for an answer; don't let anyone else tell you what you can and can't do. You're the only one who knows how strong and talented you are. You're the only one who can write your story.
2. Give yourself permission to dream. Now that I'm "wiser," I sometimes wish I could take that "knowledge" away because it sometimes hinders my ability to dream big. When I first decided I wanted to be a dancing electronic violinist, I had no idea that what I had set out to do was impossible. First of all, I couldn't dance — so I taught myself. Secondly, the chances that I would succeed were like a million to one … no, a billion to one. Literally. But I believed so strongly that I could do it. Because I didn't know it was impossible, and because I worked like I knew it was *going* to happen, it did. I still don't know how I got here, and the only explanation is God and wishing.

Finally, many fans are commenting on your videos that they want to see *Artemis* turned into a movie or at least a short film. Is there any chance of that happening?
Yaaay! That is exactly what I hoped the reaction to that video would be. I wanted it to feel like a movie trailer, and I invested a lot of money into the production so that when I was finished with all six issues of the comic book, I could take that video and the comic book to a production company and make it into a full feature film.

Tracklist

Label: BMG
Released: September 6, 2019

1. Underground
2. Artemis
3. Til The Light Goes Out
4. Between Twilight
5. Foreverglow
6. Love Goes On And On
   Featuring – Amy Lee
7. Masquerade
8. Sleepwalking
9. Darkside
10. The Upside
11. Guardian
12. Aurora
13. The Upside
    Featuring – Elle King

Leah Martin-BROWN

TRANSCENDING ACOUSTIC ROCK BOUNDARIES

By Alex Windsor

Whether it's fronting a hard rock band or belting out acoustic ballads, there are few musicians that can pour their raw being into a song the way that **Leah Martin-Brown** can. Originally from Queensland, she cut her teeth in the Australian music scene as a solo acoustic act performing in bars and clubs around Brisbane and the Gold Coast. It wasn't long before she captured the attention of an American A&R company and relocated to Los Angeles, where she currently resides. Leah's primary project is serving as the frontwoman and principal songwriter for her heavy-hitting rock group, Evol Walks. When she's not being backed up by her band, Leah can be found wielding an acoustic Gibson guitar in more intimate performances around greater LA. No matter what stage she's on, this dynamic powerhouse is sure to leave every note dripping with passion, intensity, and truth.

When did you first start getting into music?
I've always been a music lover. I think it all started with the old organ that used to be at my Grandparents' house. From the time I could crawl, I was always asking one of my relatives to lift me onto the stool so I could press all the keys and make a bunch of noise. That and forcing them to watch me act out the entire Lion King Soundtrack.

What, or who, inspired you to pick up a guitar?
There were a few different factors that led to me picking up a guitar. Firstly, I loved to sing and write poetry, and I wanted to be able to accompany myself and turn my "lyrics" into proper songs. The guitar seemed like the natural choice due to its stylistic versatility and (also) portability. I also LOVED listening to artists like the Gypsy Kings, AC/DC, Black Sabbath, Bob Dylan, etc. I wanted to play music that sounded like that!

How has your tone evolved over the years?
I predominately play acoustic guitar, so most of the changes in tone are due to a change in my playing style. When I first started, I was 11. I would just hammer away at the strings and not bother with making anything interesting. I just wanted to get the song out. Over time, I realized that there were so many different and interesting ways to play the same chord. I'm a huge fan of open chords, inversions, suspended chords and hammer-on and pull-offs during parts that may not necessarily have them written in the music. For example, I play an acoustic version of "Square Hammer" by Ghost and during the C, I like to pull-off and hammer-on my second finger — it adds a little bit of pizzazz! I also use heavier gauge strings on my acoustics to really help deepen my overall sound. I'm also a huge fan of fingerstyle.

What does the songwriting process look like for you?
I will usually play around with riffs and chord progressions at home on my acoustic and record them on my iPhone. Then I will get into the studio with our producer and really map out what we want the song to sound like. Sometimes, like in the case of "Without Me" or "Burning in Silence," I had some chord progressions and lyrics put together, and we rearranged them. Other tracks, we build in the studio often starting with a basic riff idea and going from there.

Do you have any sound preferences when you play acoustic shows?
Not particularly. The two acoustics I own have beautiful tones, so I usually just plug and play and let the rest happen naturally.

You have an exceptional way of breathing new life into some well-known songs. What is your approach for playing covers?
Thank you! As I touched on earlier, I love open chords, inversions, etc. When it comes to covering well-known tunes, I like to keep the soul of the original but add my own spin on it. I'm a bit of a sad girl, so I may change a major chord to a minor, or open things up with a different version of the original chord. For example, instead of Am in the traditional position starting on the 1st fret, I play a more open, two-fingered version starting up on the 5th fret. It's so gorgeous and really adds something extra to the track plus blends well if you're playing with someone else.

Is there anything you regularly do to sharpen your skills as a musician?
I'm constantly practicing my aural skills by playing tracks on Spotify and figuring them out by ear. I also like to test out different styles that I'm not as familiar with to try and incorporate it into my playing.

What advice do you have for other artists?
Practice makes perfect! Be extremely passionate about what you do, and don't be afraid to try new things.

Photo provided courtesy of artist

Lizzie No

HARP STRINGS AND GUITARS

By Samantha Stevens

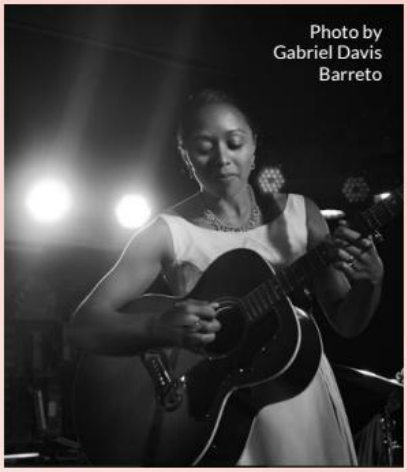


Photo by Gabriel Davis Barreto

Since releasing her debut album in 2017, **Lizzie No** has been making a name for herself as a rising star in the contemporary folk music scene. On August 2, 2019, No released her follow-up album *Vanity*. Her music is best described as a breath of life. It is a breath that draws on every possible musical element that exists today. The result is pure melodic joy.

Recently, we caught up with No to talk about her time at AMERICANAFEST 2019, the classical arrangements of her songs, and how playing the harp differs from a guitar.

You played at AMERICANAFEST at Dee's Country Cocktail Lounge. How did that go?
It was such a dream. It started just from an idea, because I was, of course, planning to go. I began to see all the posters for cool after-parties and little showcases go up. I was feeling in some way about the fact that there wasn't a black artist-focused party or even any parties with a significant number of black artists. So I was like, "Why don't I just do something myself?" I called a few friends and called a couple of artists that I didn't know personally, but I'd heard their music. So we ended up having a little shindig with Sunny War, Nicole & Rose, Tré Burt, and myself, and it was so much fun. It just felt like a little party of you and your friends picking up the guitar in the living room. It was so much fun.

How was the audience turn out?
It was great. Dee's is a really cool spot. I hadn't been there before, but I'd heard really good things about it. Everyone was super warm and welcoming. It was very low key.

You also did other shows while there?
Yeah, I did. We had our official showcase at the True Music Room the night before, which was so much fun. It's always crazy to play AMERICANAFEST, because you hear about it for years, and so many artists that I admire have gone through that festival. So it was just very cool to be playing the official festival as well.

So getting to your music style, it's been described as neo-folk, but I'm kind of curious as to how you would describe it.
Oh, that's a good question. Normally I get really mealy-mouthed when people ask me what type of music I play. I go with Americana because I like having the broadest possible terms. For what I'm making, I think of it as country music or sometimes as folk music. But I want to have the freedom to write a pop song if I want to and write a rock song if I want to and to still have it all under the same umbrella. So I feel like Americana is a really good catch-all for all of those American genres that bleed into each other in my music.

There have also been classical arrangements done of your songs. How did that translation work?
That was one of the coolest moments. I've done two of those shows: one with the Louisville Orchestra in Louisville, Kentucky, and one with the Downtown Chamber Series in Phoenix which was just with a four-piece chamber group. I have to give credit to the amazing arranger, Sebastian Chang, who I think just really got my music, especially my first album, which had some built-out string arrangements that my friend Pat Kennedy wrote. On the original record, there were some string parts, but then when I started talking to the Louisville Orchestra about coming down to do that performance, Sebastian Chang just took the recordings and ran with it. He wrote these amazing cinematic arrangements for the full orchestra. And then he was able to fluently translate them for the four-piece chamber group. I feel like those arrangements just really brought out this sort of storytelling quality in the songs that I hadn't even heard myself until I listened to his arrangements of it. So those were some really special shows that I got to play.

Thinking of the story element to your music, *Vanity* came out in August, and it seems like it's very much a story about the downside of fame. I'm just curious about what made you want to focus on that kind of theme.
I started thinking and meditating a lot on ego, and I learned about a Zen understanding of the ego. There's the self, but then there's also the self-concept that's separate. You have a soul, but you also have your idea of yourself and the stories that you tell about yourself and that they're not necessarily the exact same thing. That ego can both be a positive thing and a negative thing. You can be really confident and really full of yourself, and that's what we normally think of as ego. But self-pity and self-doubt are also part of the ego because they have everything to do with the stories that we tell about ourselves. So I kind of got fascinated with all of the different characters that we end up playing when we tell ourselves certain stories about our lives. Some days, I'm the confident person on stage; some days, I'm a struggling songwriter that feels resentful that I haven't had the same success someone else had. And then there's everything in between. It is being different characters in different voices. So the nine songs have a slightly different voice because they're different characters, but that is ultimately me.

So you draw a lot on kind of a narrative or a character-driven element?
A little bit. Yeah, some of it was going through my journals and seeing different sides of myself that can come out day by day. Then some songs like "Narcissus" I drew on a classical Greek myth and tried to see how it could be contemporary.

How has the reception been around the album?
It's been above and beyond. People really surprise you, and it can be easy to get tunnel vision when you're recording an album and thinking about your interpretation of it. But then once it's out and it stops being about you and it starts being about what other people think, I find that to be a really graceful moment where it's not about me anymore. I have to have the humility to listen to other people's opinions, and often people pick up on things that I might not have noticed. Or people will let me know a particular song really spoke to them or that this lyric stood out to them. That's just something that really blows me away. A lot of people told me that the song "Pity Party" was something that encouraged them. I had a friend tell me that the song "Born and Bred" reminds her a lot of her mom, and that just made me laugh because that song is kind of kooky.

Do you find having a receptive response from your audience helps you when you're writing afterward?
Yeah, it's encouraging. I try not to take any particular requests or critiques too seriously. I do my own thing, no matter what. But I have moments with these songs where I'm like, "Is anyone going to like it? Is anyone going to care that I'm putting this out?" Then I have people come back and say like, "Oh yeah, 'Narcissus' is my breakup song. That's my anthem right now." It's just a reminder for me to keep doing it. And even if I'm not sure how something is going to be received, if I'm vibing with it and it feels good to me, I have to have faith that it's going to touch somebody else as well.

Your music is a mix of classical with contemporary. As a multi-instrumentalist playing guitar and harp, what role does the harp play in informing your songwriting?
Everything that I do is instinctive. There is a certain feeling that you have playing the harp that you don't have playing the guitar or piano. There's a way that you hold the harp and that the harp holds to you that I feel informs my songwriting. Sometimes I'll just be playing around on the harp, trying out different riffs, and it leads to a certain kind of contemplative songwriting that I think informs my music. I can't say whether it's classically influenced or more instinctively influenced, but I think it's just the practice and the playing of the harp, and the way that the sound of the harp just surrounds you when you're playing. You can really hear that on a song like "Labor Day" because it just comes from this moment of life, of clutching the harp, and hearing the way that it sounds against my body. It makes me sing in a sort of restrained way because the harp is so quiet. So a certain kind of song gets written on the harp that I don't think can be written on the guitar.

Speaking of guitars, what type of guitars do you have, and which ones do you prefer playing the most?
My main guitar is my beautiful Gibson. It's one of the small jumbos in walnut, and it's like the greatest asset I could have. I won it from *American Songwriter Magazine* before I even knew how to play guitar. It was my kick-in-the-ass to start learning to play. That's the guitar that I travel with everywhere that I go, and it's the guitar that I perform with. It has this huge, warm voice that has really shaped the way that I sing and perform. Then the guitars that I play most often at home are these custom guitars that my Uncle Tom makes. They're called Graham guitars, his name is Tom Graham, and they're the exact opposite of the Gibson. They're super light, really wide-necked nylon string guitars that I've practiced on and done some songwriting. I love the guitars because playing them feels a little bit like playing the harp. The sound is really light and kind of floats out of the guitar, and the feel of the nylon is just like harp strings.

Photo by Henry J. Fair

Sharon Isbin

A CONVERSATION WITH ONE OF THE WORLD'S GREATEST CLASSICAL GUITARISTS

By Alison Richter

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *artist* as "someone who creates things with great skill and imagination." It's a term affixed to many, but few truly embody it as does classical guitarist and virtuoso **Sharon Isbin**.

Detailing all that she has accomplished is an ambitious goal, as her career trajectory spans years and includes everything from teaching at Juilliard, where she is founding director of the school's guitar department, to performing at the White House and the Kennedy Center, touring the world, a 2014 documentary, *Sharon Isbin: Troubadour*, winning numerous awards, working with an A-to-Z list of artists in every genre of music, leading the guitar program at the Aspen Music Festival and School, and recording 30 albums. In October, it was announced that she would be honored with the 2020 Musical America Instrumentalist of the Year award, making her the first guitarist to receive the award in the organization's 59-year history. The ceremony is scheduled to take place in December at Carnegie Hall.

By the time one would tell Isbin's story, there would be new chapters to add, as she is always busy, always creating, and always finding new challenges and directions in which to take her craft. Her latest project is a collaboration with the world-renown, Grammy-winning Pacifica Quartet for *Souvenirs of Spain & Italy*, an album of strings and guitar music from the baroque to the mid-20th century. Like all of Isbin's work, the result is more than a musical experience; it's also an emotional one that carries the listener into an "eyes closed" time-travel of sounds, cultures, moods, and intricate compositions.

Guitar Girl connected with Sharon Isbin via e-mail.

This is your first time recording with the Pacifica Quartet, but not your first time working with them. You performed at the Aspen Music Festival several years ago and then toured together. Please tell us about that performance and how the working relationship grew from there.
I invited the Pacifica Quartet to join me in 2016 for my annual concert at the Aspen Music Festival, where I direct the guitar department every summer. We all loved performing together, and afterwards, they asked if I would tour with them. They are brilliant players, so I was delighted to accept!

When did you — you, as a solo artist, and you, as a collective — decide to record an album together?
A year ago, the quartet asked if I would make an album with them on the label they work with, Cedille Records, which has a stellar reputation for great sound, engineering, and production. Of course, I said yes!

When and how did you choose the pieces to record? Were the choices exclusively yours, or did you collaborate with the Quartet in the selection process?
In collaboration with the quartet and their record label, we all agreed to record the music we had been performing together.

The common theme was Italian composers influenced by Spanish music. Playing Boccherini's famous Fandango quintet, with added castanets and tambourine, was a natural for their passionate, exciting style of playing. Boccherini was born in Italy but lived most of his life in Spain. When his contemporary Casanova first saw a Fandango danced in Madrid, he described it in 1767 as having a "lasciviousness with which nothing can compare … a dance of love from beginning to end!" Perhaps you will hear that in our performance!

The Vivaldi, written originally for lute, violins, and continuo, was reconfigured by Spanish guitarist Emilio Pujol to feature the guitar in a prominent solo role. The beautiful slow movement gives me the opportunity to improvise my own embellishment and variations in baroque style in the repeats. Performing it with just three strings players creates a level of intimacy that is magical.

The *Quintet* by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco is a rarely heard gem, full of lyricism and virtuosity for each instrument. Written for Segovia in 1950, it's a masterpiece, and the composer called it one of his "best works of chamber music." He referred to sections in the slow movement and the *habanera* in the final movement as a "Souvenir of Spain." His family actually originated from Spain, but was forced to flee the murderous Inquisition, settling in Italy in 1492. In 1939, Castelnuovo-Tedesco and his family fled from the Nazis, settling in California, where Mario enjoyed a prolific career writing for both film and the concert stage.

The work the quartet plays without me is a bullfighter's prayer by Spanish composer Joaquín Turina. He wrote it originally for four lutes, which were mandolin-like instruments in the day, and then created the string quartet version, which he knew would be more popular.

Can you "take us into the studio" and describe what a day of sessions was like?

Instead of a studio, we recorded in the beautiful and resonant Auer Concert Hall at the University of Indiana in Bloomington, where Pacifica is in residence. We had just performed concerts together in Florida the week before, so we were able to approach the three half-days of recording in January 2019 like another performance. Amazingly, a few months before, I had learned that Castelnuovo-Tedesco's granddaughter lived just a few blocks from me in New York City! I was thrilled and honored to meet her. She shared many inspiring stories with me about Mario and gave me a copy of his handwritten manuscript of the *Quintet*, which proved to be a treasured resource for us all in researching notes, dynamic markings, and more. The exchange made me feel very connected to the composer and deepened my passion for his music and the upcoming recording.

This is your debut project for Cedille Records. How did that come about?

Cedille Records is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting composers and performers from Chicago. Pacifica was in residence there for years, and so it is the label they work with, and I was their guest. It was a fantastic experience! I have worked with Sony, Warner Classics, Erato, Bridge, and other labels, depending on the projects.

In this era of single-song downloads, you continue to create full-length, exquisite works of art, and best of all, you have an audience for them — an audience that still wants the traditional musical experience. What is your overview of the music industry, coming from the perspective of a true artist recording these timeless classical pieces?

Thank you! One has to be ever more resourceful to bring recording projects to fruition, including finding sponsors who believe in sharing beautiful music with the world. Remarkably, there are still a multitude of independent classical labels doing the important work now that the majors used to do. After *Souvenirs*, I recorded two new projects for 2020 release (making three albums in four months, which was nuts!): *Affinity*, an album of works composed for me and titled after the jazzy, sizzling concerto for guitar and orchestra by Chris Brubeck, son of Dave Brubeck, whose centenary will be celebrated in the 2020-21 season, and world premiere ragas for guitar and sarod composed for me by the legendary Amjad Ali Khan, performed with him, tabla and his two brilliant sarod-playing sons, Amaan and Ayaan Ali Bangash, with whom I toured India last February.

You're recognized as the world's greatest classical guitarist, and rightly so, but part of your repertoire is to collaborate with artists in every genre of music. How do exploration and experimentation make for a better musician?

I can't speak for others, but I can say 100 percent that my life and music have been immeasurably enriched by many collaborations with extraordinary artists in genres both outside of and within classical. In each case, it was a passion for the music and performers that inspired me to embrace the challenge of forging something new.

Both you and the members of Pacifica Quartet are faculty members — obviously at the university level, but still part of music education programs. Day after day, our public-school arts programs continue disappearing, and without them, we lose valuable contributors to the future of music. Would you mind sharing some closing thoughts about this important topic and why everyone should be concerned about the future of arts and music education?

Studying classical music as a child has so many benefits, including honing skills that increase coordination, dexterity, mental stamina, creativity, listening, teamwork, and problem-solving. This training has been shown to enhance the ability to learn other subjects as well, from languages to math. A recent study even showed that playing an instrument in childhood develops parts of the brain that can later help to ward off dementia!

Juilliard encourages its students to embrace the idea of artist as citizen, training and encouraging students to share their talents in underserved communities for the betterment of all. One of my students, Alberta Khoury, from Australia, became the first person in the 130-year history of the school to think of walking about with her instrument every week to serenade staff and administration in their offices, including maintenance workers, food service providers, and more. Last year she was the first guitarist to be awarded a Kovner Fellowship, and this year she is the first guitarist to be accepted into the DMA program, which she encouraged me to create a couple of years ago. What's not to love about that!

> I can say 100 percent that my life and music have been immeasurably enriched by many collaborations with extraordinary artists in genres both outside of and within classical.

Marielle KRAFT

HAVING THE COURAGE TO JUMP

By Alex Windsor

Sometimes you just have to dive into your dreams head first, and nobody seems to know this better than **Marielle Kraft**. Armed with quirky melodies and poignant lyrics, Marielle summarizes that last two life-changing years of her life in her new album *The Deep End*. She left her stable teaching job to pursue a career in music, moved to a new city, and ended a long-distance relationship — now she hopes that her experience can help inspire others to let go of the past pain and reflect and take hold of their future. Not only are the songs contagiously catchy, but they are also highly relatable and appeal to a wide range of listeners. Be sure to check out Marielle Kraft — she might just be the little dose of honesty and motivation that you didn't know you needed.

When did you first start making music, and how has your sound evolved?

I've had a guitar in my bedroom since I was13, but didn't start making music until late high school when I fell into a group of wildly talented friends who would jam to John Mayer and The Lumineers when we would hang out. Eventually, they taught me some chords. Then in college, songwriting really became a part of who I am. Over time, my music has grown as I have, rooting influence in purposeful pop rather than the more folky sound I adopted when I first began strumming. I've begun to incorporate synthesizers and beats in some of my tunes to fuse my songwriting roots with modern production. Lyrically, my songs mirror my journeys through change, heartbreak, love, fears, and self-reflection. Even since my release of *The Deep End* EP in July, my sound is still evolving with new material that I'm writing. I hope to always explore new boundaries throughout my career.

Photo by Nick Grant Photography

> I want listeners to really feel me through my music, but really know me when I'm sharing the room, on the stage in front of them.

Did you have any major influences growing up?
I first picked up the guitar because Taylor Swift was everything to me at 13. I would learn her four-chord songs and sing about tragic heartbreak like I really knew what that meant. Her use of detail and vulnerability hugely influence the lyrical specificity in my own songwriting. Colbie Caillat's effortless melodies pushed me to find the same in my song structure. Then more recent pop songwriters like Julia Michaels, Betty Who, and Maisie Peters have really fueled my exploration of production that fits more in the mainstream world. I am on a constant search of how to keep my authentic storytelling voice while bringing in production elements that enhance those emotions in a way that connects to the broader listening audience.

Is there a specific approach that you take to writing songs?
I think 99 percent of my songs begin when I'm not prepared to write a song. In the grocery store, or at a coffee shop, or when I'm driving to a show, a random word, phrase, or thought will pop into my head. Without thinking, I jot it down in my phone notes. Then later, when I'm back with my guitar, I'll work through the song if the idea is good enough. Most of these random collections of unrelated notes don't become full songs, but sometimes they spark other ideas or at the very least, keep me mindful of my own reflections. I'm not someone who is constantly writing every single day, but when I do, it's usually fruitful and feels like a piece of my heart was finally set free.

Your new EP, *The Deep End*, is the product of major life changes. What inspired you to find the courage to finally pursue your dreams?
I think the impetus was my mom sitting me down last year asking, "If you could do anything in the world without worrying about the money or obstacles, what would you do?" As a full-time educator at the time, this question felt abrupt, but I told her honestly, "I'd want to be a musical artist. A real, touring, creating, big-time singer-songwriter." And she uncharacteristically responded, to my utter shock, "What's holding you back?" Until that moment, I hadn't even considered this as a realistic path that I'd ever follow. That conversation changed everything. I knew I had to step away from teaching at the end of the school year to give everything I had to pursue this dream in music. It meant the world to have my mom behind me, giving me the courage I didn't know I needed to jump.

What gear (guitars, amps, accessories, etc.) are you currently using right now, and why?
My main guitar I play for shows is an Epiphone DR500-MCE Acoustic/Electric Masterbilt, which I got for my 16th birthday and has been my steady best friend since. I love its rounded bass-heavy sound (especially for when I play solo). For writing, I'm almost always on my bed or floor with my Taylor GS Mini. Its body is a more comfortable and intimate size for me in those spaces, and it's an easy traveler. I'm looking into buying my first electric guitar soon, so I'm open to suggestions of some of your favorites!

The song "Toothbrush" consists of very real emotions tucked into light-hearted melodies. How did this song come to fruition?
"Toothbrush" was written in the exact moment after the depicted story happened — and I think because of that, I didn't get to filter any of the details or emotions as I wrote the lyrics. It's a somewhat comical situation, waking up to someone else's unexpected toothbrush left on your bathroom sink, but with that shock swirled deeper, raw emotions of "I'm still not ready to let in someone new." I immediately rid the toothbrush from my sink and grabbed my guitar as this song flowed out of me. I'm proud of this song because it packs a vulnerable and heavier story into a concept as random and silly as a one-night stand toothbrush. It's been such a treat to share this story every night and learn how directly people can relate to something like this, too.

Did you face any challenges while writing and recording your new EP?
Because this was my first studio-produced EP — I'm still very much shaping my sound and style — the five songs were recorded in three different studios with three very different producers. I think because of that, it's not as cohesive as it could be sonically, but I'm still learning what I want and need in working with others to produce my music. "Test Drive" (track 1) and "Better Without You" (track 5) were written over a year and a half apart, and I think that's pretty evident within the span of the 18 minutes it takes to listen through the project. But overall, I love this EP and am so proud of all of the work and learning that went into bringing it to life. I'm working with a few of the same producers on my new music, and already having an established relationship from *The Deep End* recording process has only elevated what we are creating next.

Is there a specific sound or tone that you try to achieve while onstage? While recording?
Although a number of my recorded songs include synthetic beats and samples, my five-piece backing band and I stick to the authentic track-free performance arrangements on stage. That comes with its own set of challenges, especially in making the songs compete with the fully produced ones, but it pushes us to be really tight and full of energy. I want the audience to see how I wrote each song (me and my guitar), but feel the range of emotions the band brings to the live arrangements. While in the studio, however, I'm very meticulous in recording each instrument piece by piece, maintaining the fine line between competitive pop production and the vulnerable imperfections that come with being a singer-songwriter. I want listeners to really feel me through my music, but really know me when I'm sharing the room, on the stage in front of them.

JUDY PASTER

I'M A VERY STARDUSTY KIND OF PERSON

By Tara Low

Growing up in Philadelphia, **Judy Paster** was inspired by the folk music she heard her older siblings playing in the house — Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young and Carole King's *Tapestry*. She began writing songs when she was 8 years old. Dealing with a traumatic youth and later with the death of her father from Alzheimer's, Paster pours her heart and soul into her music. Paster says, "I like to dream and be creative," and like many artists, she moved to Nashville to follow those dreams.

Like Stardust was released this summer with producer Bill McDermott of Omni Sound Studios and contains eight songs with a perfect blend of folk and classic country including a cover of Dylan's "Blowin' In The Wind." When asked about her new music, Paster shared with us, "'Like Stardust' is one of the tracks on the album and I decided that's what I wanted to name the album. I'm a very stardusty kind of person. In other words, I'm earthy, I'm grounded, but my head's kind of in the star sometimes. I like to dream and be creative, and I just felt like that song was the most exemplary of my artistry and my personality."

Paster was busy during AMERICANA FEST where she was participating on a panel with several attorneys discussing copyright law from a musician's perspective, but she took the time to chat with us on her new music.

There are eight songs on *Like Stardust* and you chose to cover one of Bob Dylan's songs "Blowing in the Wind." Why that song?
About a year ago, a friend of mind from Rhode Island that's been tracking with me and following my music for quite some time said he would like to hear me cover that song. The same day I posted a live video playing the song on Instagram, this country artist commented and said, "This is great, you are like a country Mary Travers." I'm embarrassed to say that I had no idea who Mary Travers was so I looked her up and she's Mary of Peter, Paul and Mary, and they covered that song in 1963. I was like, "This is weird." So I studied the lyrics. It's an anthem for generations and I thought that was also very who I am. I like to speak out for the people, all the generations. So that's why I did it.

Is there a theme to this album?
My husband says it should just be called *Judy's Love Songs*, because they're all love songs on some level. I would say that 'Like Stardust' kind of covers everything. I'm just a blend of the earth and the universe. I think each song, whether it's a love song or whether it's about fulfilling your dreams, following your dreams, they all kind of go together when you listen to the project. There is a sad song on there.
'With a Kiss' is a pretty sad song. It's the story of my parents, because when my dad lost his memory, he would pucker up for a kiss from my mom — he never forgot the kiss. He died a few years ago and I did not want to write the song at first. When I was ready, I got with a good friend of mine, the co-writer, and we crafted and wrote the song. It's a beautiful song.
I'm definitely classic though, no matter where I go, I seem to tend towards classic sounds, which I think that speaks to the Dylan cover. That song is 50 plus years old.

TONE TALK WITH *JUDY PASTER*

What is your definition of tone?
I look for some warmth and depth, I don't like brassy or shrill. Sometimes with the warmer tones, they can be a little harder to play at times, so I kind of look for a combination, for that perfect feel. Besides tone, I want to be able to handle the fretboard with my hands and my fingers, because some guitars can be big on me — and I played big guitars for years.

Which guitars are you currently using and why?
I play Taylor guitars mostly. They are great for fingerpicking as well as a great sounding acoustic rhythm guitar.

Are there certain recording techniques you prefer in the studio?
For recording preferences, whatever the latest technology my producer pulls out, I'm good! I try to stay in my lane as the songwriter and artist.

How do you keep your sound consistent on-stage?
I use a lot of vocal technique to keep my sound consistent on stage — good breathing and enunciation and staying on the mic for the best sound.

What does your practice consist of?
My practice consists of weekly voice lessons, vocal scale practice most days, guitar scales and running through set/song lists with plugged in guitar and singing in mic through my home sound system.

Photo by Perry Joseph Photography

What is your advice for young women who hope to work in the music industry?
Set goals for yourself and write them down; cultivate honesty and authentic relationships; try to do more for others then they do for you; practice if you are a musician, and don't give up!

GUITARIST VICKI GENFAN ON FINDING LIGHT IN THE HEART OF DARKNESS

By Alison Richter

Guitar aficionados and acoustic music fans are familiar with guitarist **Vicki Genfan**. A singer, songwriter, and performer, her unique approaches to the instrument — utilizing 29 alternate tunings and applying a percussive technique that she calls "slap-tap" — have made her an internationally recognized virtuoso, albeit a modest, self-effacing one.

Trained in jazz and classical music, with influences ranging across the spectrum, she has released six albums, each one a unique project showcasing both her original material and personal interpretations of classic songs. To date, she has created seven instructional videos for TrueFire, offering guitar players at every level an opportunity to learn and apply her methods. Throughout the years, she has regularly appeared at festivals in the U.S. and Europe, and is an in-demand clinician and teacher at music camps.

In a word, Vicki Genfan is busy — working, writing, and sharing her art. Or so it has been for many years … until her world came to a traumatic halt in December 2018, when she lost her beloved brother and sister-in-law in a drowning accident. Felled by grief, she and her wife, Tay, put their lives and careers on hold, immediately relocated to Texas, and began handling family affairs while in the throes of shock and despair.

Almost a year later, Genfan is rebuilding her inner strength. The pain of loss is ever-present, the ensuing responsibilities continue, but she is finally regaining her footing and looking toward the future. She was at home in North Carolina, between trips to Texas, when she spoke candidly with *Guitar Girl Magazine*.

Let's start with the fact that you've started performing again.
Yes. A couple of cool things are going on. I started to branch out and make some musical contacts while in Texas. The Austin area is filled with musicians. One of my friends, an amazing singer/songwriter named Terri Hendrix, is a local legend there. She started a nonprofit called Own Your Own Universe, OYOU, and she does a lot of outreach in the community. She has a fundraising festival

Photo provided courtesy of artist

> I'm going to the NAMM Show in January. Fret Monkey Records is a label that features fingerstyle guitar.

every year for her organization, called Tammi Fest, and I played that in October.
Through her organization, she has different teachers come in, so I'm going to do some teaching there as well. We're making plans for me to do some guitar workshops and whatever else I can do for her. I'm excited about having the opportunity to be involved work-wise with Terri. She's a force to be reckoned with.
I will be back in Germany in November for a big guitar festival in Hamburg called Hamburger Gitarrentage, and I'll be doing a workshop there. I'll be performing in the Frankfurt area as well.
And I'm working on a project in Germany. This is the longest project I've ever worked on, because I only work on it when I'm there. It's with a friend and colleague of mine named Christian Lauterbach, who is a fantastic producer and guitarist. We met at a concert in Frankfurt many years ago and we clicked. We appreciated each other's work, and we started writing music together. Christian is a heavy rocker when it comes to his own stuff, but he loves the interaction and collaboration with me because it allows him to take the acoustic guitar and do some crazy things with it.
We'd come up with cool grooves, and he'd take a little bit of it, chop it up, loop it, put it through a processor, and all of a sudden it would sound like a keyboard or an orchestra. We've written about six tunes, really worked on four of them, and they're like nothing else I've done. They're way produced, massive vocal tracks, and I've loved working on it. I love dance music, R&B, and electronica, and this goes in and out of those worlds, with a tinge of rock here and there. It's a fun project. Christian and I have become the best of friends, and it's great working with him. We're done with most of the recording, and we're trying to get a drummer/producer who's a friend here in the States to do some drum tracks for us, and we're trying to get a well-known engineer to mix for us.
We're going to release these four songs in the versions that Christian and I recorded them, and then simultaneously, within the same project, I am going to release a version of each of those songs with just me and one acoustic guitar, which is something that I love to do. I love to take complex songs that have great grooves and are maybe orchestrated for a huge production and create an arrangement just for acoustic guitar and vocal. So it's going to be an interesting and different project for me. Since I work on it only when I'm in Germany, I don't know when it's going to be done, but we're getting closer. It's been great to branch out in that way and do that kind of work, because I love the recording studio.

What do you most enjoy about it?
It's like being in an art class, especially with somebody like Christian, because his knowledge and production capabilities are so vast and huge that we can take something and go anywhere with it in terms of sounds and instrumentation and production. He really is a master. It's like being in this huge art studio, with every kind of medium available to you, and you get to create. Playing live is like showing the finished product, and that's a whole other wonderful experience. Interacting with a live audience and all of that is incredible. But I also love being in the studio.

You released a CD, *In the Shadow of a Small Mountain*, with Sally Barker in 2017. Tell us about that.
That was a great project. Sally Barker is a very well-known singer-songwriter in England, and she was the runner-up on *The Voice* in 2015 or 2016. I've known Sally since 2001. She was part of the original tour Women Onstage, which is what got me to Germany that year. Once Women Onstage wasn't happening anymore, she and I would tour as a duo sometimes. She'd play her tunes, I'd play my tunes, we'd guest on each other's tunes, but we had never written together. So we thought, "Let's write an album's worth of music together."
She came to the U.S. twice, once in the winter and once in the summer. We were in North Carolina, and a lot of the music is North Carolina-inspired. She was very taken with this area. Sally's got an incredible voice, and it was wonderful to work with her and really focus on writing. We recorded it with Tay, my wife, in our studio in New Jersey, and fidelity-wise, it sounds beautiful. I loved the opportunity to arrange stuff in an acoustic, Americana kind of way, with a lot of mandolins and some banjo, which I hadn't focused on before.

From what I read, this was five days of writing.
We wrote for five days at a time. The first batch, we wrote twelve songs in five days, and we spent the next year finishing and arranging them via Skype sessions primarily. I enjoy collaborating, and one of the things I'm looking forward to in the future is collaborating with different people.

How does working via Skype add different elements to long-distance collaborations?
What you cannot do on Skype is play music together at the same time, because you cancel each other out. But we didn't need to do that. We were writing, and in that process it was brilliant. We'd be in a session for an hour or two, sometimes longer. She'd write, I'd write, and "What have you got?" I'd read it to her, she'd read it to me, or I'd play a progression and she'd go, "Oh, let me try this." It was like being in the same room together, so for that process it worked really well. But trying to put a song together at the same time — that's another technology, and I don't know where we stand with that yet. I know people are doing it, but it requires something more sophisticated than Skype or Messenger.

You released another instructional DVD, *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Cookbook*, since we last spoke.
That one and the *Open Tuning Handbook: Rhythm*. I love teaching the hard stuff — tapping, open tunings, harmonics, and all the stuff that's kind of advanced. However, there's not a huge amount of people that can do that. With these two videos we tried to address the player who's maybe a late beginner or early intermediate.
With the *Open Tuning Handbook*, I created a simplified way to understand it, so that people can jump into that world early on in their playing. We work with five tunings, and for each of the tunings I show you diatonic chords that are the basic chords that come out of a major scale. They have all the basic building blocks for tons and tons of songs. I wrote three different levels of little exercises, etudes, in each of the tunings, starting at a pretty simple level and then getting a little bit harder, so that you can spend some time in the tunings, play around, and hear how it sounds doing different things. I wanted a way to lead people into it that wouldn't be intimidating, hopefully, and that would just give them cool resources that they can go out and use.

How difficult is it to create something simplified? Open tunings are second nature to you, so what was the process for breaking them down to make them simple enough for beginners to understand?
I have practice with this, because the very first video I did for TrueFire is called *3D Acoustic Guitar*. That video takes my most difficult techniques and breaks them down. While that course is geared toward a more experienced player in general, the way that I simplified it, I think anyone could understand it — and it took me years to be able to do that. Through that process I've trained myself to be able to do that, and I'll explain how I went about it.
As I began to come out of my little shell after years of playing in my room, and I began to share what I was doing, I realized there were other people playing other kinds of cool strange ways, too. I was immediately aware that I could not do what they did, and I was intrigued with understanding why I could not. What I realized was that I need to see something in order to learn something, especially if it's difficult or different from what I've done before. I need to see the very first step. You have to take it back to 0 and show me 1. When I learn 1 completely in my muscle memory, then I can learn Step 2, but I can't go from Step 0 to Step 10.
That's what gave me the impetus to break apart what I was doing, and break it into its simplest and most basic techniques. What is the very first thing you have to do in order to do a sophisticated slap tap thing? I realized there were two or three basic techniques that a person had to master before they could then take it to that next level. So I created a bunch of exercises, and I used the example from a song of mine called "Kali Dreams," which is a song I wrote for one of my cats. I drew some of the music from that, and I incorporated it into these original

exercises. That was an incredible exercise for me in exactly what you're asking.

Having gone through that process with that original *3D Acoustic Guitar* teaching video, now when I'm coming up to do an open tuning handbook, I had to think about it the same way: What does somebody need to know that won't intimidate them, that won't overwhelm them? One of the foundations of that were these diatonic chords. You have a major scale, and from a major scale we grab a melody. Once we have that, we take those same notes from that major scale, we put them together, and we have diatonic chords. Of course, there is music theory behind that, but you don't need to know that, other than to know that the building blocks for songs come out of a major scale in its simplest form. You can definitely get more complicated, but you don't have to

For a lot of folk music, pop music, rock music, blues, a lot of those notes are going to be drawn from that major scale, and chords you're going to be using are going to be drawn from that major scale. So I thought, "Let me show people these diatonic chords in each of these five tunings, so that you can take a song you already know and substitute these chords." As an example, I used "Let It Be." The verse uses almost every one of those chords. I take you through the verse of "Let It Be" in each of the tunings, so you get to hear, and play along with me, that song in five tunings. I give you bunch of tools from the get-go.

Following that video, what was your goal for the *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Cookbook*?

The *Cookbook* is like a precursor to a course I did many years ago, which was called *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Survival Guide*. That course had 14 techniques you could employ to spice up your playing. Say you play cover tunes, and you're always using the same chords, you're always playing in the same way, and you're always using the same strumming patterns. This course gives you a whole set of new skills that you can insert into your playing.

With the *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Cookbook*, we tried to present that same kind of stuff. Let's add some new things to your playing, but you don't have to be that intermediate to advanced player. You can be playing for six months or a year and already looking for new ways to do things. Again, I got to simplify, simplify, simplify, and it will add new flavor and possibilities to your guitar parts. I've chosen ten popular chord progressions and written twenty performance studies to give you an idea of how you might put these ingredients to use in songs you're working on or already playing, or songs you're writing. It really is a simplified version of the earlier *Acoustic Rhythm Guitar Survival Guide*.

In terms of the *Open Tuning Handbook*, we called it *Rhythm Edition*, and I'm primarily working chord progressions and chords. The plan is to create another edition that will focus on playing some lead lines, playing some riffs. How can I find my way to playing a pentatonic scale or jamming around with a blues thing or play some lead lines on a folk tune? That's an edition that we hope to come out with in the near future.

What do you have planned for the coming year?

I'm going to the NAMM Show in January. Fret Monkey Records is a label that features fingerstyle guitar. They sponsor all kinds of events, and they're sponsoring an event at the NAMM Show called Women of Fingerstyle Guitar. It's on January 16, and they're featuring Kaki King, Muriel Anderson, Christie Lenee, myself, and some others. It's going to be at the House of Blues in Anaheim. I'm excited about that. It seems there has been a push recently toward women in the fingerstyle realm. It's finally coming to the forefront. There are a lot of women playing fingerstyle guitar nowadays.

Any theories as to why?

I'm not sure. I just think it's been growing, and as more and more women see other women playing, it's almost exponential. A lot of that has to do with the influence YouTube has. I think we're also at a time when women are having more opportunities. We've come a long way.

Are you still teaching?

Yes. I'm available for Skype lessons. I may branch out in the future, but right now I'm accepting a limited number of students, and they can contact me through my website.

Is there new material in the works?

I love the six-string banjo, and I'm going to be working on some new material featuring my percussive techniques on the banjo. I've also recently had the opportunity to experiment with the ToneWoodAmp. I'm very excited about that, and I will be talking more about that soon. And, as always, I'm grateful to D'Addario Strings and Luna Guitars and Gray Burchette, who made my custom guitar. That still is an amazing guitar in my arsenal, and I'm grateful every day for Gray's work on that instrument.

At the risk of great understatement, you had a very difficult year. Do you want to talk about that?

First, I want to say that I don't want to talk about a tragedy so that I can get sympathy. I want to talk about it so that maybe I can be helpful to somebody who might be experiencing something similar. So I'll explain that while something absolutely unexpected and unfathomable happened in my family, I've been going through an incredible grieving process, I've had to deal with an unbelievable amount of business, state probate, handling two people's deaths and everything that means, and at the same time attending to a nephew who is going through medical challenges that he will go through the rest of his life.

When death happens in your immediate life, one of the things you think about is, What am I doing in my life? Is it what I want to be doing? What do I value? Am I living in accordance with my values, or am I living in some rat race? Am I caught up in some kind of work that isn't feeding my soul? You look at everything and you examine it differently. You question things.

One of the things that I've come out with at this moment, just after a short period of time, is I've confronted some of the fears I've had in my career about putting myself out there. I've looked at some of the ways I've held myself back because I'm afraid of whatever, afraid to ask for work, afraid to be seen, afraid to be rejected, afraid to … I don't know … just afraid. I've also looked at some of the broader ways that I feel I can work, which have to do more with the healing work that I do.

So I've been looking at all these things. I have to work, I have to make money again, I have to do my living. How do I want to do that? Do I want to change anything? I've come to the conclusion that I want to do as much work as I can in areas that feed my heart and soul and energy. Playing music feeds me, performing feeds me, being in community feeds me, doing the sound healing work that I've studied and been trained in feeds me. I love to teach all of these things. And so I have a renewed commitment to being brave and doing these things. It makes me feel like I'm taking care of myself, and that's how I'm thinking about "What am I going to do?" and "What are the next steps I'm going to take?" It's helping me to be more courageous and not just settle for self-doubt.

As women, I think we're prone to self-doubt, maybe more than men. We're trained in it. And I'm just like, "Am I going to die thinking, 'Oh, it's too bad I wasn't brave enough to do that or do this,' or 'Why didn't I ever teach that?' or 'Why didn't I ever do sound healing sessions?'" So I'm pushing myself to do some good things that I've been apprehensive about.

I'm not full-time, 100 percent back to normal. I feel like I'm in pieces, and I am committed to putting myself back together. My vision is that I will be stronger, I will be more whole, and I will be truer to myself and my values in the process. The situation has forced me to grow and expand in ways I wouldn't have, couldn't have. Handling grief and living with grief is a lifelong project. I lost my mom when I was 23. That was very tragic for me. I've been dealing with that in my own way, or not dealing with it, and this is giving me an opportunity to deal with that again as well, and to learn that we can live through grief.

As writers and songwriters, we think a lot about what inspires us to write, what environment do we need to be in, what circumstances do we need to be able to create and write music. I think about those questions a lot. When I was on my way to Texas in December [2018], I was beside myself, but I kept thinking, "There's got to be some light during this period of time. There has to be." In February, my nephew was wearing one of my brother's shirts, and a short lyric came to me. I titled the song "Wear I Am." [*Note: The video can be found on YouTube.*]

I wrote two more songs during that month, but I haven't finished them enough to play them publicly. But this song was simple; it came so easily and quickly, and it was special. Every time I've played it at a concert, somebody comes up to me from the audience and tells me about themselves or someone they know who has worn an article of clothing that belonged to a loved one and what that feeling is like, to feel them wrapped around them.

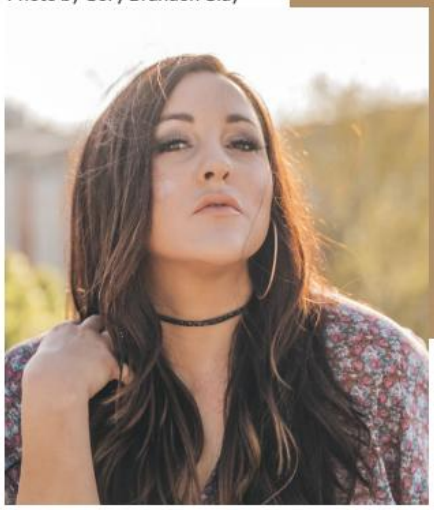
I've had to readjust my expectations of my ability to write music. I'm sure I will write a lot of material at some point; I just have to be patient, and I have to know that you can't be in the middle of a crisis and expect yourself to all of a sudden turn that into creative art because you want to. A friend said it best to me: "You have to let yourself metabolize this event." You have to digest it, you have to take it in, and that is a process that nobody can predict how it goes, how long it takes, or what its path is. So that's also been a learning process — to honor this process for myself, not judge myself, and to trust that I still am a creative person, I still am a writer, I will write music, I will write songs, and I don't have to feel panicky about it. It's OK. It's really OK.

BRINN BLACK

Cigarettes, Disaster Relief and Double Capos

By Tara Low and Steve McKinley

Photo by Cory Brandon Clay



Raised in Chester, VA, but now hails from Nashville, TN, rising country artist **Brinn Black** moved to *the* "Music City" at the age of 18 to make her dream come alive. The raspy-voiced non-smoker was named after her grandmother, shares her "award-winning show choir teacher" mother's love and gift for song and is an advocate for a number of Nashville programs.

From her press kit, it says, "60 seconds. That's how long it takes to be completely captivated by Brinn Black". It also goes on to say how she jokes that, "I came out of the womb in sequins with a microphone in my hand."

"I just feel too much; I need to go smoke."

The Virginia native also uses her musical talents with the creation of "Lyrics On The Lake," a multi-day festival that benefits the Children's Miracle Network Hospitals of Central and Southwest VA.
Guitar Girl Magazine sat down with the Nashville country artist to catch up on her past struggles, her recent single and what she would tell you younger self.

You have a professional singer's pedigree. When did you start playing guitar?
About 11 years ago.

What is it about Nashville that moves you?
I love country music, and it just felt like this is where I needed to be.

You're here at CMA Fest, how exciting! What have you had going on?
I know! I've had signings, different shows, a Renegade Radio show on Thursday, and a fan party on Wednesday.

What was your first guitar? What do you play now?
I play Breedloves. My first guitar was a used Fender acoustic-electric that I traded with my guitar player for a PA once I became a Breedlove artist. When I went to NAMM in LA for the first time about ten years ago, Breedloves had only been out for a couple of years. I was with my manager, and I was coming down the elevator, and I heard these guitars — it was like angels. I was like, "Ahhh. What is happening?" So, we went to the booth and talked to them and told them I had just written a song called "Breed Love." So, they invited me back to the booth later to play. I picked up the guitar, and I ended up coming back and playing at the booth. I kept coming back and playing it all weekend because I loved it. And at the end of the show, they were like, "Hey, nobody's bought this guitar. Do you want it?" I walked away from NAMM with that guitar, and it's been like my child since. I love it.

"60 seconds. That's how long it takes..."

How did you get involved in music? What was your inspiration?
My mom and then I also just did it. I started putting on little house shows when I was 4 or 5. My mom is a singer and a show choir teacher. I always sang in my church. For as long as I can remember, I knew this is what I wanted to do. So, there was no turning back. It was just like Nashville — coming here, doing my thing. I loved Broadway, too, growing up. So, I thought about going to New York for a minute — a tiny minute, but I was like, "No, I'm not an actor."

You released a new single this summer, "72's". It's titled after a pack of cigarettes?
I had a boyfriend and he always smoked Blue Marlboro 72's, and I told him, "I'm gonna write a song about your cigarettes one day." I thought it was a great song title, so I put it in my phone notes years ago. Well, we broke up, taking a break, you know how that goes? I got with my girlfriends one day, and we were just swapping stories and looking through song titles. I threw out that title. They were like, "I love that." We were talking about why our boyfriends have to use smoking as a distraction from having a hard conversation — "I just feel too much, I need to go smoke." So, it turned into this love song, but it was written out of angst.
I think this song has morphed into this thing that the boys want to hear what the song says — put that down, pick me up, and the girls want to say it. We didn't intentionally write it with that mentality. From people's feedback, that's kind of what it's become, and it's been really cool to see that. And my ex loves it too.

When you wrote the song with your girlfriends, did you write with your guitar? Is that your songwriting process?
We did, and yes, I do like to sit with my guitar when writing songs. I have this double capo system that I love. About ten years ago at NAMM in LA, I met the guys from Kyser Capos, and they had just come out with this little mini capo that's in open E. I've always been a fan of the Indigo Girls and Lori McKenna, and I'm so in love with a lot of open tuning stuff. So, I tried the capo, and that's been part of my sound now. It's so easy. That's what I used when I wrote "Daddy's Medicine." But then you can move it up the neck and add a regular capo on behind it. So, I just double capo it up all the time.
I taught myself guitar, and the open tunings were a way for it to sound big, and I didn't have to be too technical with my fingerings and stuff. So, what started out as a way to simplify my guitar playing, but still be able to write, became part of my sound, which is really fun.

"I thought about going to New York for a minute."

You were a victim of Hurricane Andrew and now you do a lot of charity work?
I actually am. My mom is a teacher, and she always does a lot of charity work with her kids. It's been important to her to instill that in her kids that she teaches. She was a single mom and took us around with her to the nursing homes at Christmas time, bringing turkeys to families at Thanksgiving, that type of stuff. So, I just grew up doing it naturally. Our house got hit by Hurricane Andrew when I was 5. We lost everything and had to start over again. Having lived through it, I do a lot of disaster relief stuff because I get it.

What would you tell your "younger self"? Any advice to young girls that want to learn to play guitar?
Yeah. To not rely on anybody else or what they think. I actually wrote my first song when I was in fifth grade, and I didn't tell anybody about it. I was walking home from the bus stop, and it came to my head. I went up to my room, wrote it in my journal, added a melody and everything. and was like, "What is this?" I felt weird because I didn't know anybody that wrote songs. I didn't even think to myself, where did these songs on the radio come from? But I remember ripping it out of my journal and folding it up and putting it under my mattress. And I never told anybody about it. I was afraid they would think it was weird.
I totally forgot about it until I was speaking to a class of fifth-graders, and they asked me when I wrote my first song. I had this memory flashback, and I was like, "Wow." I can't believe I did that. A lot was going on at the time at home. I don't know; it was just weird to me. But it's not weird if you write songs. It's a gift. I remember calling my mom after I had that memory and asking, "What would you have done if I told you?" She said, "I would've been over the moon. I would have encouraged you."
So, for any little girls out there that feel a lot and need it to express it, to do that. They don't have to show anybody; they can keep it to themselves. And when they're ready, they can show people. But to know that's okay. And as far as guitar, I learned by putting on headphones and putting on songs I liked and just strumming and playing along with them. I looked up chords and never stopped learning. I'm still learning all the time.

What lies ahead on the dusty trail for Brinn Black?
Well, I have enough songs for an album, but definitely an EP.
Her biggest influences include Jennifer Nettles, Patsy Cline, and Kelly Clarkson. She's performed opening for Ronnie Dunn, Darius Rucker, Justin Moore, Little Big Town, Montgomery Gentry, Gretchen Wilson, LoCash, Dustin Lynch, Sammy Kershaw, and Lady Antebellum, as well as played at the Bluebird Café and the legendary Ryman Auditorium.

Kalie Shorr

OPEN BOOK - EVERY WORD ON THERE IS TRUE

By Tara Low

Rising country music star **Kalie Shorr** recently released her debut album, *Open Book*, which she co-produced with Skip Black in a little one-room studio in Nashville. The 13 songs on the album are an "open book" into Shorr's life. She collaborated with songwriters from her band, friends, and fellow members of the all-female Nashville songwriting showcase group Song Suffragettes. Shorr is an outspoken advocate for female empowerment and promoting women in country music. She hosts a Radio Disney show with fellow co-host Savannah Keyes called "Let The Girls Play." She has also been part of the Song Suffragettes weekly showcase since its inception and been featured on PBS and NPR on gaining more radio airplay, as well as many other initiatives. #letthegirlsplay

Shorr's first major hit was her 2016 self-penned single "Fight Like A Girl." Originally from Portland, Maine, the young singer-songwriter, like many others before her, moved to Music City to pursue a career in country music. She released her first EP *Slingshot* in 2017, followed by *Awake* in 2018. She has been named "New Artist You Need to Know" by Rolling Stone, "The New Nashville" by Teen Vogue, one of "2017's Hottest Artists Under 25" by Taste of Country, and "Top 10 Country Artists To Watch In 2018" by the Huffington Post.

Fulfilling a lifelong dream, Shorr has performed at the Grand Ole Opry 14 times. She was planning on performing the weekend we chatted with her in Nashville, "It's always magical, but performing on the same weekend of the album release will be special." We talked about her new album, *Open Book*, co-producing with Skip Black, co-writing, and advice for her younger self.

It's so nice to be here with you again, Kalie. Your new album *Open Book* is out, and it is quite different than some of your previous work. Tell us a little about the new album and how it differs from your last EP *Awake*.
It definitely still brings in the rock influences of *Awake*, and Skip produced that one, but this was my first time co-producing a song of mine. I co-produced "Time's Up" for Song Suffragettes, and that was my first time doing that, but this was a whole different experience. I had a crazy whirlwind year where a lot of personal stuff happened —it's all documented on the project. But as I started to consider how I was going to record it and go about that whole process, it felt like it wasn't right to do it in an environment with people I didn't know and wasn't necessarily close to would be involved. So it started to organically evolve to where my co-producer Skip Black and I were building out these tracks, and I was like, "Well, what if we just did it, the two of us?" He was really encouraging, and it was really nice to have someone say, "I know it's unfamiliar territory, but we can do this." We basically locked ourselves in a little one-room studio and laid down the tracks. We spent two weeks there every day laying down the foundations for the songs.

I remember from our last interview at CMA Fest where you mentioned about you and Skip getting back to basics. You said you've made the big shiny, polished, grandiose music, but you wanted something more raw and real.
Definitely back to basics. I played a lot of the guitars on the record, and then when we needed more, other people would come in. I played guitar on "F U Forever" and "World Keeps Spinning," and I think one or two others. Skip was really encouraging in that, too, because it was my first time playing the guitar on one of my projects as well. Then he played a lot of the other instruments and then for the supplemental ones, his sons played and my live band filled in the blanks. One of my good friends, Annie Wildgen, who co-wrote "F U Forever" with me, she did background vocals. Natalie Stovall played fiddle on "Gatsby" and Stevie Woodward, who is, well, they're all members of Song Suffragettes, but she played harmonica on "Too Much to Say." Also, Candi Carpenter, Savannah Keyes, and Robyn Collins. So it was such a friend group situation where I was close to everyone, and they understood the story behind the songs — they knew exactly what inspired them. So I feel like the passion and emotion really comes across from the people who are a part of it. And it made for a very fun environment to make this album.

How long have you been working on this album?
The oldest song on there, I think, was "Big Houses," which we ended up finishing last summer, but we started it a few months before. But most of the album was written in February. "Escape," "Too Much to Say," "Gatsby," and at least four or five of them, and "F U Forever," were all written in like two weeks. So once I knew how I wanted the album to be, everything just fell into place from there. It was just a really cool project and, we had such a fun time.

Who is Jonny Shorr? Any relation?
It's so funny because everyone thinks that because it's such an uncommon name. I met him through Katie Stump from Honey County. We wrote this song called "Messy," which is on the album, and he played piano on that. I have people all the time tell me they've written with my brother, and I'm like, "No, he's a rapper, he lives in Maine." We jokingly call ourselves The Shorr Family Band, but no relation at all.

How was your experience co-producing with Skip, and what did you learn from the process?
Skip really encouraged me. I learned a lot about my influences and how

> It's never the end of the world, and trust me, everything's the end of the world when you're a teenager.

those bleed over into the Sonic side of things. I learned a lot about the technical side of things, and I had so much fun playing and just being more involved in the sounds — make that sound smoother and especially with the utility instruments like mandolin, banjo, and all that. Skip has so many incredible ideas, too, so it was very much so back and forth. But I co-produced 10 out of the 13 songs because there were three that he was like, "I have a vision." And I said, "Go for it." So it was definitely a huge learning experience, and now I don't think I'll ever not do it because it was so incredible.

It's a very personal piece of work. How did you approach opening up and putting your life into words for the public?
It's so weird to have these songs in the world because they're so personal. I went on a date last week, and he was like, "Oh, I heard your song 'Escape.' I was like, 'Oh, so you literally know everything about me now? Cool.' No, great. What an interesting way to start this? And so, yeah, I mean the songs are just so, so personal, and Skip and I had both lost someone to a heroin overdose. He lost his niece on Halloween of last year, and I lost my sister on January 5th this year, so they were really close together.
That's what "The World Keeps Spinning" is about. We wrote that together with Robyn Collins, who is kind of like my Nashville mom. She wrote a lot of the songs on the project, as well. It was just really, really from the heart. I cried during the vocals and kept crying, so eventually, we just kept it in there. We also had Annie do background vocals on it, and then Skip wanted to sing backgrounds on it as well. It's very much so his song too. It's our story — just a different day. We ended up dedicating the album to Megan and Ashley
Then I went through a breakup after six years. I thought I knew what this album was going to be, and then when that happened, everything got scrapped except for "Big Houses." My life changed overnight. I'd never been single as an adult; I'd never gone through that level of heartbreak. I thought it was going to be a breakup album, and there's actually more life songs in there than break up songs. Being forced to confront some family stuff was really hard, too.
I think that's the biggest difference between *Open Book* and *Awake*, which is how much growing up I've done in the past year-and-a-half. And you can very much hear that in this album. Every word on there is true, and I sometimes think in songwriting, you fill in the blanks. You might write a song about something and then tweak it a little. But these songs are real stories. They're exactly what happened, to the point where, as I said, it's a little uncomfortable because you're reading my diary out loud.

Any particular song that stands out to you that you want to reach your fans?
"Escape" is, in my opinion, one of the best songs I've ever written. It's definitely one of the hardest for me to sing. It's a song about having the choice not to follow the path that everyone you've seen before you have taken. It started off as a song called "Break the Cycle," and then we came up with the line, 'everybody needs an escape and mine was leaving,' and we were like, "That's it." It's really sad, but I think that there's a lot of hope in that song. People already have "Escape" tattoos, which is great. It feels good to have them out in the world and to hear people share their stories because it makes me feel less alone, in the same way, it makes them feel less alone.

You've experienced quite a bit so far since your move to Nashville when you were 18. What advice would you offer to a young girl wanting to get into the music industry?
It rarely happens overnight, and if it does, you'll wish it hadn't because you need that slow climb. It's not just paying your dues, but it's also adjusting to how bizarre all of it is. At the beginning of this year, a lot of things were hitting me in the tabloids about my sister. So having my life feel so visible and just given the fact that I put myself out there for it.
So don't try to be an overnight success, you'll hate it. And then also, everyone here is talented, and it's so easy to feel intimidated by it. Still, I worked really hard to turn that into being inspired by it to get better. I learned from the people who I looked up to. Have your inspirations become your peers. That's my goal. I want to work with those people that I've looked up to. And remember, talent isn't the only component. You can be insanely talented, but if you don't work hard and you're not nice to people, you'll never make it.

With all you have been through, the challenges you have had to overcome, knowing what you know now, and with this album you have completed, as an "open book," what would 25-year-old Kalie tell her younger teenage self?
It's never the end of the world, and trust me, everything's the end of the world when you're a teenager. I would just like to tell her, and I wouldn't want to spoil any surprises, but it all works out.

***Open Book* Tracklist**

1. "Too Much to Say" (Kalie Shorr, Robyn Collins and Ian Christian)
2. "Escape" (Kalie Shorr and Candi Carpenter)
3. "Messy" (Kalie Shorr, Jonny Shorr and Katie Stump)
4. "The One" (Kalie Shorr, Skip Black and Savannah Keyes)
5. "F U Forever" (Kalie Shorr, Candi Carpenter and Annie Wildgen)
6. "Alice in Wonderland" (Kalie Shorr and Candi Carpenter)
7. "The World Keeps Spinning" (Kalie Shorr, Skip Black and Robyn Collins)
8. "Big Houses" (Kalie Shorr, Skip Black and Savannah Keyes)
9. "Gatsby" (Kalie Shorr, Skip Black and Candi Carpenter)
10. "Thank God You're a Man" (Kalie Shorr, John Caldwell and Robyn Collins)
11. "Vices" (Kalie Shorr, John Caldwell and Robyn Collins)
12. "Lullaby" (Kalie Shorr, Robyn Collins and Will Stone)
13. "Angry Butterfly" (Kalie Shorr, Simon Reid and Fred Wilhelm)

PARENTAL ADVISORY EXPLICIT CONTENT

Catch Kalie on tour this holiday season with Leann Rimes You and Me Christmas Tour

Photo courtesy Decca Records

The Wandering Hearts

WE ALL HAVE HEARTS IN OUR MUSIC

By Tara Low

Bandmates AJ Dean (guitar/vocals), Tara Wilcox (vocals/percussion/tambourine), and Francesca "Chess" Whiffin (mandolin/vocals) are the London-based three-piece Americana band, **The Wandering Hearts**. They have been quickly gaining ground in the US the last several years after making their big debut here with country music star Marty Stuart on his Late Night Jam at the Ryman in 2018. AJ said, "The show was 12 hours after we landed. We did a couple of songs not knowing anything other than it was this prestigious venue that we looked forward to performing in our entire working lives. We got out there and we got crazy standing ovations. From then on, it was just sheer wonder for us." Chess added, "Marty introduced us and said, 'I love these guys, and you're gonna love them too.' From that moment, we seemed to have the audience which was so incredible. Marty is the most incredible, generous, wonderful man. We're so lucky to have met him." The band has been the first British band to debut at both the Ryman and the Grand Old Opry in the same week.

The band was quickly signed by Decca Records and released their debut album, *Wild Silence* in 2018. They have also recently released singles, "Jealous" and reimagined versions of Miley Cyrus and Mark Ronson's "Nothing Breaks Like a Heart" and Billie Eilish's "The Party's Over." Chess tells us that "it's really freeing to reimagine someone else's song."

We met up with the trio at CMA Fest in between shows where they were heading off to perform at the Acoustic Stage and then off to the Grand Ole Opry. When asked about the band name, they originally went by another name, but when they went to sign their record deal, the name was taken. So AJ explained, "We all have our hearts in music, and we're all kind of wandering wayward souls, so Wandering Hearts just made sense."

When it comes to influences, they all have quite a diverse background which lends to their unique sound. From Chris Stapleton, when he had just released *Traveller* back in 2015, to Motown, folk, blues, pop, R&B, and rock 'n' roll. Chess said, "It's quite hard to pigeonhole us into any particular genre because we're so diverse. But with the varying influences and the way that we write and the way that we sing, Americana seems to sum us up better. We have got a country influence, but we're not out and out country. We've been really well accepted into the country scene here and at home and also the Americana scene, so we're really kind of lucky to be straddling the two."

They've received a lot of support from Gibson. AJ has been playing the Emmylou Harris custom model which he says he loves. "I'm not usually a big fan of small body guitars, but there is something about that guitar that's got an incredible tone, and it plays so nicely. And I love Emmylou as well, so that's a bonus." Chess plays an Epiphone mandolin and tells us "I love her!"

Wandering Hearts will be releasing their second album soon, so stay tuned for details.

AUBRIE LEE SELLERS
FAR FROM HOME

Los Angeles-based singer-songwriter **Aubrie Lee Sellers** is no stranger to the music industry — her parents are country music artists Jason Sellers and Lee Ann Womack. Her stepfather is music producer Frank Liddell (Miranda Lambert, Brandi Carlile, Jack Ingram). Traveling on a tour bus a great deal as a child, it was quite natural she would pursue music as a career. "I always knew I was going to do this. It was not only my parents' thing, but also my grandparents, so it was something that was around for many generations. I couldn't imagine myself not doing it." She recalls the first guitar she received when she was 13. "It was an Epiphone version of the Gibson J-200 because I wanted to be like Emmylou Harris, and that's the guitar she had."

Sellers' sophomore album, *Far From Home*, will be released on February 7, 2020, via Soundly Music. Singles from the album already released include "Drag You Down," "My Love Will Not Change ft. Steve Earle," and the title track, "Far From Home." Recorded at Sonic Ranch near El Paso, Texas, Sellers worked with her stepfather in co-producing the album. "On my first record, I had a lot of artistic input, but I wasn't as familiar with the process of making my own record. So on this album, I had a little more input on everything, and I really enjoyed it. I'm looking forward to working on more projects."

What started out as 25 songs, was narrowed down to 12 twelve tracks that made the cut. "Many of the songs were penned on the road. I had traveled a lot with my family when I was younger, but not as a solo artist. Coming into adulthood and into my own artistry for the first time as a solo artist, I had been on the road and gone through a lot of mental stuff." At the time, she had been listening to a lot of Quentin Tarantino soundtracks. She is also inspired by Link Wray's style of music, surf rock, and vintage rock. These inspirations make up what she describes as a "cinematic" and "very guitar-driven" record.

While growing up on the road with well-known parents may sound glamorous, it comes with setbacks as well. Sellers has been outspoken about her struggles with anxiety and being an introvert. "When I first started touring, I wasn't in charge of this feeling. I was so out of my comfort zone. I had to force myself for multiple tours to just do it, even though I was freaking out the entire time. And now, after doing it for a few years, I've gotten to the point where I'm just doing it now. I think I will always be a little more anxious than the average individual, but that's probably what drives me to make art, so that's okay." These feelings can be heard weaved throughout *Far From Home*, especially in the single "Worried Mind" which Sellers says is a song about what she experiences as "an introvert who becomes an extrovert on stage."

Co-writers on the album include Ethan Ballinger, Adam Wright, and Park Chisolm, who all play on the album as well. "I work with them all the time. I find myself drawn to like-minded musicians and people that I connect with musically." Sellers tells us she also worked with other musicians who inspire her. "I was able to write with Iain Archer while I was touring in the UK and with Brendan Benson of the Raconteurs in Nashville. We wrote 'One Town's Trash.'

There's only one song on the record that I didn't write. That would be my cover of 'My Love Will Not Change.' That was written by Shawn Camp and Billy Burnette and became a famous bluegrass song by Del McCoury that I re-did in my own style." In a recent press release, Sellers stated, "When I envisioned the sound for the track, I knew there was no one else who could do it like Steve. He has always been one of my favorite artists, and getting to sing with him is not only a major highlight, it's just plain badass."

Blending blues, rock, grunge, and a dreamy, cinematic sound, recording the album at Sonic Ranch allowed the band to experiment with sound. "Sonic Ranch has a ton of pedals and instruments. Literally, you just pick pedals off the wall. I can't even tell you what all the instruments are on the record! We took our time and tried different pedal and amp combos, making new sounds. It was so much fun!"

Far From Home Tracklist

1. Far From Home
2. My Love Will Not Change feat. Steve Earle
3. Lucky Charm
4. Worried Mind
5. Drag You Down
6. Going Places
7. Glad
8. Haven't Even Kissed Me Yet
9. Troublemaker
10. Run
11. Under the Sun
12. One Town's Trash

The Sisterhood BAND

Alyssa Bonagura and Ruby Stewart on writing, recording, and sisterhood

Tara Low

Upon meeting through mutual friends, Alyssa Bonagura and Ruby Stewart immediately knew there was a connection. "We tried to figure out how we knew each other, so we started talking about our lives and our upbringing. My parents were the in the country music band Baillie & The Boys, so I was on a bus my whole life from the time I was three weeks old. And she told me that her dad was Rod Stewart." Ruby chimes in, "I had my first passport when I was three weeks old — I was on a plane at three weeks old!" They were both in England at the same time when Alyssa was attending Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts studying sound engineering and music, both lived in Los Angeles at the same time just a few blocks from each other, and both were on television commercials being aired at the same time. "We had never met before, but literally had parallel lives our entire life growing up." "Soul sisters," says Ruby. "Hence, the name The Sisterhood. We felt like we had been sisters, and the universe was preparing us to meet one another and start this band."

The Sisterhood Band is a blend of lush harmonies, West Coast folk, with a splash of country-pop. We chatted with Alyssa and Ruby at CMA Fest, where the two had recently released two singles, "Get Up And Go" and "Bullet" which they produced in Alyssa's parents' studio in Franklin, Tennessee.

On the writing process:

Alyssa: We write everything together from real experiences. A lot of our stuff starts with us having wine around the table and talking about our relationships that are either failing or growing. "Bullet" was one of those songs about these guys we had that weren't the best for us and thinking back, ah, we dodged a bullet. And then "Get Up And Go" is another one about a guy I was dating that wouldn't take me anywhere, and I just wanted to get up and go. So Ruby was in London for New Year's and tells me to come out there and bring him, and I tell her I can't.

Ruby: So I told her to come by herself. The next day after a long conversation we had, she sends me this chorus, and I was like, 'That's a hit.' When I got back home, we worked on it, and it turned into a summer smash. It's so much fun to listen to.

Alyssa: The one thing I would love to say is that when Ruby and I met, we really bonded over Joni Mitchell. And a big, big influence of me playing guitar is Joni Mitchell's tuning. So when you hear our music and listen to the recordings, a lot of it is all in open tunings, and just made up, because that's how I learned because my parents wouldn't teach me how to play because they didn't want me to get in the music business. I was like, "Fine, I'll figure it out."

On the recording process:

Alyssa: My dad and I built this studio in our attic. I had been working with this producer that was telling me, "I don't want you to produce. I don't want you to play anything." And I play all kinds of instruments. I was an only child surrounded by a bunch of instruments my whole life, and he wouldn't let me play anything. When Ruby and I met, we started bonding over the fact that she had just gone through the same thing with her producer telling her, "Just sing, we just want you to sing." And I wanted to get involved in producing new music. We bonded over the fact that there were people in our lives that were telling us we couldn't do it. So we became each other's biggest champions.

Ruby: I have to say, it's my favorite studio to record in. We recorded *Summer Setlist* there — the vocals, guitar parts, everything. It brings a different side out of my voice, personally, because I'm comfortable in her house.

Alyssa: Guitar-wise, too, for me to have Ruby around, it's been really empowering. You know, sometimes when you put a girl in a room with amazing guy guitar players and you want to play, it's hard to feel like you're confident enough. But with Ruby there with me and I'm playing my electric guitar, she'll say, "That's badass, play that again."

Ruby: She didn't really know that she could play such great guitar licks until recently. She was strictly an acoustic person, and then she started playing electric. You played your dad's Firebird one day, and I was like, "You're really good at that."

Alyssa: I always wanted to play rock and roll guitar, so I get to in The Sisterhood now. I play Fender and Gretsch guitars mainly. I've got two acoustic Gretsch guitars that I've had since I was 14. And then I love my dad's old vintage guitars. He's got so many guitar collections. My favorite guitar to play is my '72 Tele. I just got an old SG that we refurbished to the original color. It's got three pickups, and it's incredible. It's white — it matches my white boots!

Ruby: Everything has to match.

On Sisterhood:

Alyssa: I'm an only child and grew up on the road. Ruby had eight siblings, so she had a very interesting upbringing. I can't imagine what that's like to have a bunch of brothers and sisters.

Ruby: But you find sisters and brothers and friends, and I think that's why we called it The Sisterhood Band. We don't really believe that it has to be in your blood to be your own family. Really, it's about making strangers your family. We feel like we're sisters.

Alyssa: We help each other and lift each other up. That's what Sisterhood really means.

Words of wisdom for future guitar players:

Alyssa: Don't give up even though it hurts your fingers — build callouses. Literally, my guitar was my best friend. It sounds silly, but it really was growing up. And it's treated us well. And thank God we get to tour the world and take a guitar around and write songs wherever we are. Keep going because music saves us all.

Ruby: Also, don't be intimidated by different people telling you, you can't do it, because you should be doing it. My dad taught me how to play. I'm not as good as Alyssa, but …

Alyssa: She's actually really good.

Ruby: I'm not a good guitar player. I know how to play a few blues chords, and that's enough to write. But I used to do this thing where I put glue on my fingers so I wouldn't have to feel the strings because you get blisters from playing. I got glue all over the neck of my dad's guitar. And he's like, "You can't use it anymore. Sorry." And then he bought me my first guitar after that. And I was like, "Okay. Cool." So I have a Taylor now, and I still have it. We've had really supportive parents. We're very lucky.

Photo by Matthew Berinato

ASK ALEXX

Dear Alexx,
What do you do in your personal life to promote wellness and mindfulness?
~Madness to Creation

Dear MTC,

This is a GREAT question, and it applies not only to musicians but to **everyone** in general. It is extraordinarily important to take care of yourself and be in tune with your mind and body. I find that whenever I'm off-balance in my personal life, my professional life also suffers. I may physically *be* somewhere, but I'm not as "*present*" as I should be.

Sometimes, I forget to take care of myself because I work insane hours, and I have a lot of jobs and responsibilities. I have to remind myself to take breaks, eat small, protein-packed meals throughout the day, and, most importantly, allow myself to have some fun once in a while.

I know all of this sounds incredibly obvious, but how often do we find ourselves burned out, frazzled, or running on fumes? I've definitely experienced this quite a bit in my lifetime—especially as a musician, and I'm still learning to listen to my body when it's telling me that it needs food, some time away from everything, or some exercise.

One thing I try to do for myself is to take at least an hour or so every day to do something for me. This usually means strumming on my guitar, watching a movie, working out, or taking a walk in the park. It doesn't have to be super structured, but it should be something you do every day to prevent yourself from going crazy or being consumed by the minutia of day-to-day life. I also exercise for an hour or so every single day in the morning to get my day started, to get the blood flowing, and to get my mind working. I read. I educate myself. I try to learn new things for personal and professional enrichment. I meet up with good friends to catch up, toss ideas around, and be inspired.

If you're always working, not enjoying yourself, and not taking the time to celebrate the little victories, then what is it all for? Seriously. Think about it.

I promise that if you take care of *you* first, then the rest will come. You will have the power and the energy to accomplish just about anything when you're feeling balanced.

For more an Alexx, visit AlexxCalise.net.

Photo by Anabel DFlux

Alexx Calise is an accomplished singer, guitarist and songwriter. Perhaps best known for her hit song, "Cry", which became a staple on the show "Dance Moms" and boasts millions of hits on YouTube, Calise's raw emotion, heart-and soul-lyrics and unmistakable vibrato have impacted thousands of young girls all over the world. Calise is currently working on new solo material and songs for licensing, and she will soon be releasing a new EP with other music project, Batfarm. In addition to her musical pursuits, she also works in publication relations and marketing and owns her own party entertainment business. When not playing shows or writing music, she enjoys horror movies, exercising or taking a well-deserved nap.

Have a question for Alexx?
She has an answer! Email info@guitargirlmag.com.

GIG GALLERY

Jade Bird at the Showbox at the Market in Seattle, WA on October 18, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Maddie Poppe at the Showbox at the Market in Seattle, WA on October 12, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Lzzy Hale at Aftershock Festival Discovery Park, Sacramento, CA on October 11, 2019
Photo by Jack Lue

Audrey Collins at the Hard Rock Café in Seattle, WA on October 26, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Courtney Marie Andrews at the Paramount Theater in Seattle, WA on October 25, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Lauren Duski at the Moore Theater in Seattle, WA on October 22, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Abby Brown at the Jewel Theater on September 22, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Samantha McKaige at the Fremont Abbey in Seattle, WA on September 21, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Crimson Apple at Downtown Disney on October 6, 2019
Photos by Jack Lue

Samantha Fish at the Neptune Theater in Seattle, WA on September 25, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Alexis Taylor at the Skylark in Seattle, WA on September 7, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Nili Brosh, Jennifer Batten and Gretchen Menn at Casa Escobar in Malibu, CA on November 8, 2019

Emma Anzai of Sick Puppies at the Aftershock Festival Discovery Park, Sacramento, CA on October 12, 2019
Photo by Jack Lue

Ariana Gillis at the Fremont Abbey in Seattle, WA on September 21, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Upsahl at the El Rey Theater in Los Angeles, CA on September 6, 2019
Photo by Jack Lue

Hailey Whitters at the Tractor Tavern in Seattle, WA on October 31, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Fern Unfurling at Tim's Tavern in Seattle WA on November 6, 2019

The Killer Queens at The Gaslamp in Long Beach, CA on August 31, 2019
Photos by Jack Lue

Orianthi with Robby Krieger (the Doors) at Lucky Strike Live Hollywood on October 30, 2019
Photos by Jack Lue

Skillet at Wiltern Theater in Los Angeles, CA on September 1, 2019
Photo by Jack Lue

Zepparella at the Snoqualmie Casino on August 30, 2019
Photos by Kirk Stauffer

Jenna Raine at the Columbia City Theater in Seattle, WA on October 29, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Lydia Loveless at the Showbox at the Market in Seattle, WA on September 4, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

Lindsey Stirling At the Roxy in Hollywood CA on August 27, 2019
Photo by Jack

PVRIS at the El Rey Theater in Los Angeles, CA on September 6, 2019
Photos by Jack Lue

Mariah Belgrod at The Rendevous Seattle on September 22, 2019
Photo by Kirk Stauffer

The Regrettes at The Fonda Theater in Hollywood CA on September 20, 2019
Photos by Jack Lue

Lzzy Hale and Joe Hottinger of Halestorm performing on stage at Cal Coast Credit Union Open Air Theatre in San Diego, CA on October 15, 2019
Photo by Chuck Lapinsky

Martin OOOCJr-10E Acoustic-Electric Guitar

By: Lynnay Della Lucé

As a gigging musician, I have to say hands down, Martin Guitar's Junior Series auditorium-style OOOCJr-10E Acoustic-Electric Guitar is one of the best acoustics I've played in this price range. Don't be fooled by the "junior" label. This guitar packs a punch, plays fantastic, and can still fill a room with Martin's classic, beautiful tone.

"Sweet resonation with warm even tones."

This guitar has the Martin "Triple O" body, so it is just a little smaller than a dreadnought. I like that the body width is slightly thinner, making it more comfortable on stage. Big bulky acoustics can be cumbersome while gigging, especially if you are a female. The OOOCJr-10E just feels like a natural extension of your body, especially with its smooth tapered neck that plays so comfortably. Honestly, I could not put this guitar down.

There are two models, one with and one without a cutaway. The one I reviewed was the cutaway model, and that is the one I recommend. Not only does its cutaway at the 14th fret give you access to more frets, but it comes with the Fishman Sonitone electronics, which send your beautiful acoustic tone seamlessly to your amplifier.

"Very balanced."

The OOOCJr-10E features sapele satin cherry finished back and sides giving it strong lows and midrange, much like mahogany, but you get a little more range on the high end too, which makes it very balanced audibly. The hand rubbed satin clear finished top is Sitka spruce, which helps with warmth and projection, outlined with black binding. The combination makes for a sweet resonation with warm even tones. With its hand-rubbed finish, 20-fret, plekked frets, 24" scale length neck made of select hardwood, FSC certified Richlite fingerboard material, 1 3/4" nut width, and mortise and tenon neck joint are a perfect blend of superior design and delightful playability.

"Like a natural extension of your body."

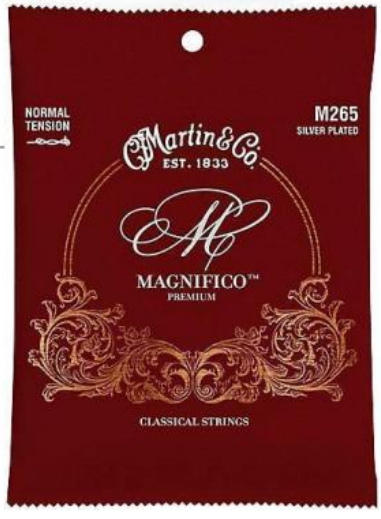
Lastly, the recommended Martin Retro Light MM12 strings are a perfect sonic match for the OOOCJr-10E.

If you are looking for an acoustic that is portable, comfortable to play, sounds great plugged in, and at a reasonable price point for a Martin Guitar ... this is the one. Even if you are a beginner guitar player but want something that you can grow with, this would be perfect. As for Martin fans, go for it. I own two Martins myself and I am going to buy this one because it's just too good not to own!.

List Price: $799.00
For more from MartinGuitar.com.

Martin Magnifico Premium Classical Guitar Strings

By: Lynnay Della Luce'



Finally, a set of classical guitar strings that don't have a plunky nylon sound. I was amazed at how full and rich the Martin Magnifico Premium Classical Guitar Strings sound. Developed exclusively with Aquila, they offer precise intonation and exceptional tuning stability. The proprietary synthetic material used was designed to emulate timeless gut strings, so it gives it more bite than typical nylon strings but still gives you a creamy, mellow tone.

I have an old classical guitar that belongs to my mother and had not played for quite a while and needed some attention, so I pulled her out, cleaned her up, and tried the Martin Magnifico Premium Strings in the normal tension (M265) — they also come in a hard tension (M165). These strings have been very inviting and natural to play and feel good as your fingers glide over each string. I have never been a huge fan of nylons because I feel like your fingers get caught up with the friction, but that is just my personal feeling.

"Full and rich."

I would absolutely choose these strings in a studio situation. They have a distinct smooth clarity that would shine in a mix. The G, B, and high E strings are grey instead of clear or black, which I thought was interesting. These strings also only come in a traditional tie-end, so if you don't know string a guitar with tie-end strings, have no fear as there are plenty of tutorials out there that show you how easy it is.

"Emulate timeless gut strings."

These Martin Magnifico strings settled in well. I had minimal tuning issues right from the start. I thought it was going to take a little longer, but it didn't take much time at all. I highly recommend these all around. Between the clarity in the tone, playability, and comfort, I would say these are definitely worth trying out and hearing for yourself.

Price: $10.99
MartinGuitar.com

ToneWoodAmp

By Vanessa Izabella

When first reading the description of the ToneWoodAmp, I wondered what type of audio quality I could really expect from this piece of technology. I have to say that I was pleasantly surprised by the ease of use, the ease of installation, and the sound quality from this device. I was also delighted to see there was a left-handed model for us lefties, as we usually miss out on some of the coolest things, so this was a huge plus.

The ToneWoodAmp attaches pretty easily to the backside of your guitar. There is a magnetic X brace that goes inside your guitar. The brace installs using 3M double-stick tape that does not harm the inside of your guitar and can be easily removed. On the back of the ToneWoodAmp, there are rails that have micro-suction pads that keep the unit securely in place as well as protecting the finish on the guitar. It is very stout and secure — it's a powerful magnet. I was able to secure it very quickly and with ease. I am by no means a guitar tech of any sort, and it was reasonably simple for me, which was another plus.

"I really enjoyed exploring the sounds and options on the ToneWoodAmp."

I attached it to my acoustic-electric and plugged the output of my guitar into the amp. I have a small 4-band EQ on my acoustic, so I flattened out all the settings and went to town experimenting with the sounds. The ToneWoodAmp works by vibrating the backside of the guitar that it is attached to, and the desired effect comes out of the soundhole. It's like creating a built-in amplifier.

"The quality of sound was impressive, and the sounds were very inspiring for songwriting, in my opinion."

The instructions and online tutorials were very helpful. I had just a small problem with feedback initially, which I was aware may happen. With a couple of adjustments to a few global settings, I had everything dialed in quickly.

"Another great tool to help us towards our musical goals."

The unit has three circular knobs that can be turned or depressed to access different functions. The sound options are Room, Hall, Plate Reverb, Delay, Auto-Wah, Overdrive, Tremolo/Delay, and Leslie style tremolo. Each of these effects can be altered and customized and can all be saved to the unit for future access. The unit also features USB jacks for software upgrades, and a 1/8" jack to connect to an iOS device to expand your sound library even further.

I really enjoyed exploring the sounds and options on the ToneWoodAmp. The quality of sound was impressive, and the sounds were very inspiring for songwriting, in my opinion. Another great tool to help us towards our musical goals, whatever they may be.

For specifications and more information, please visit **ToneWoodAmp.com.**

Price: $249.00
ToneWoodAmp.com

Fender American Acoustasonic Telecaster

By Alex Windsor

The name Fender has been associated with innovation since the company's inception in 1946. It's founder, Leo Fender, dreamt of building instruments that were practical, versatile, and exemplary – the new Acoustasonic model lives up to that mission.

"The hollow body is naturally resonant, yet the thin design makes it sleek and ultra-comfortable to play."

Launched at NAMM 2019, the Acoustasonic immediately grabbed the attention of both acoustic and electric players, and for good reason. The hollow body is naturally resonant, yet the thin design makes it sleek and ultra-comfortable to play. The Deep-C shape neck is paired with an ebony fretboard for superb playability.

"A vast palette of acoustic tones."

One of the most notable features of this guitar is the unique 3-pickup configuration that makes up the Acoustic Engine: the Fishman Under-Saddle Transducer (piezo) for producing the classic acoustic tone, the body-sensing Fishman Acoustasonic Enhancer for capturing harmonics, and the Acoustasonic Noiseless magnetic pickup that takes the instrument into the brighter sounds of the electric guitar. These pickups can be manipulated by using the five-way Voice Selector switch and blending with the Mod-Knob, which has two distinct voicings that can be accessed when rolled in either direction. The end result is a vast palette of acoustic tones that is easy for any artist to tap into.

The Acoustasonic is a significant upgrade from its older cousin, the Telecoustic — primarily because of the level of craftsmanship that went into production. Whether you are a professional acoustic player or just looking for something convenient to have around the house, this guitar delivers the quality we have come to expect from the Fender name.

Starting at $1,999.00
Fender.com

Taylor Builder's Edition Grand Auditorium K24ce: Artfully Designed, Ergonomically Built

By Alexx Calise

Taylor's Builder's Edition K24ce is truly a work of art, from the actual instrument itself, all the way down to its lovely velvet-lined case. Introduced at the 2019 Summer NAMM Show, the body of the K24ce is made of Hawaiian koa wood. It boasts a contoured cutaway; soft, rounded edges; and Taylor's innovative V-Class bracing, which dramatically increases the volume and sustain in your playing. I noticed this immediately upon strumming my first chord, which was surprisingly resonant and full-bodied.

The intonation is impeccable, and no matter where you play on the fretboard, chords — simple or complex — are pitch-perfect. This exceptional guitar has that trademark Taylor brightness, but the koa wood gives it an added warmth and shimmer. Its rounded edges and beveled contour make playing extraordinarily enjoyable, and it is much easier to get to some of those hard to reach notes which are higher up on the fretboard.

Perhaps its most stunning features though (at least visually speaking) is the sweeping "spring vine" inlay, giving it a refined, incredibly graceful look. Add to that its ultra-smooth "Silent Satin" finish -- this isn't your run-of-the-mill acoustic guitar. The Builder's Edition exudes sophistication and class, and it dances with you as you play.

In terms of playability and comfortability, this model is *unparalleled*. The body isn't too thick *or* too thin, and its rounded edges hug to you as you play. Your fingers effortlessly glide across the fretboard, and its fantastic ergonomic design (specifically the beveled armrest) helps to eliminate any stress put on you by leaning on or over the guitar.

Taylor's Expression System pickups are also fantastic, and mainly augment what's already there whenever you plug in and play. You are ready to hit the stage without worry, as you will be getting crystal-clear tonality and plenty of volume.

Taylor has outdone themselves with the Builder's Edition. In terms of the look, feel, tone, and overall sound, this is hands down one of the most comfortable *and* inspiring guitars I have ever had the pleasure of playing. Immediately upon picking it up, it felt like it was built specifically for me, and I innately wanted to start crafting songs on it. The K24ce is very much an original, and a treasure to behold with its stunning aesthetics, gorgeous tone, and innovative acoustic guitar technology.

Price: $5,299.00
TaylorGuitars.com

Shubb C2G Capo Royale for Classical: Shines Like Gold

By: Lynnay Della Lucé

I have an old no-name classical guitar that is over 50 years old with a thick C shaped neck. I have had trouble finding a capo that will fit the neck as normal capos just don't fit correctly, so I end up having to retune each string.

Upon checking out the Shubb Capo Royale C2G made for classical guitars, what stood out most was the ability to adjust the tension, and once I adapted the pressure to exactly where I wanted it, the capo stayed set. No longer did I have to worry about having too much tension on this old guitar or the tuning being totally off.

This capo is designed to "press the strings just like your fingertip." In my opinion, the C2G gave my guitar a softer tone while keeping the tuning more accurate. It also comes on and off the guitar with ease and feels sturdy.

The Capo Royale is an excellent choice if you need a reliable capo for a classical guitar with a flat fretboard. And what about looks? The Shubb Royale Capo series features a gold-toned titanium finish (available in gold or rose gold) that is both durable and beautiful.

MSRP: $29.95
Shubb.com

PRS SE Angelus A60E Acoustic-Electric Guitar

By Lynnay Della Luce'

As a guitar player, when talking acoustic guitars, we all have our opinions on brands, and certain ones always seem to come to the top. PRS was not one that immediately came to my mind, but the A60E Angelus surprised me and changed my mind. It has a particular tonal quality if you are looking for a deeper, smoother sounding acoustic.

The A60E sounds glorious alone or plugged in. Part of this is due to the PRS Hybrid X / Classical Bracing, a mix between the bracing on "Torres-inspired" classical guitars and steel-string guitars, which adds to the resonance. Adding to this glorious sound are the woods used in the construction. The back and sides are Ziricote layers, giving it that rosewood warmth, paired with a solid Sitka spruce top finishing it off with the bright, full clarity perfect for fingerpickers or the aggressive acoustic player.

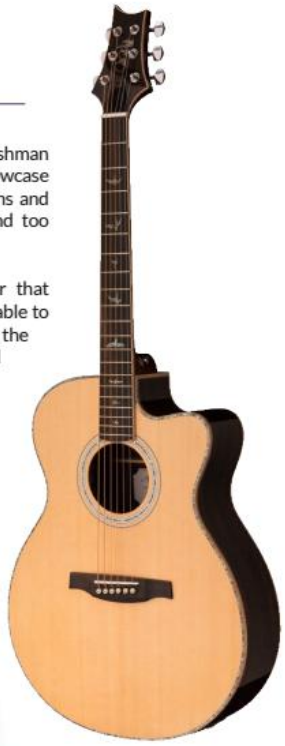
For aesthetics, the A60E is absolutely beautiful. It comes in a stunning natural finish with ebony fretboard and a curly maple binding. The signature PRS bird inlays in abalone always catch my eye when playing. Balancing out the curly maple used on the fretboard, it is also used for the binding. The abalone soundhole rosette details round out the beauty of the A60E. The "A" in the series model represents the Angelus cutaway body style, which I have become quite a fan of as the cutaway allows me to play those hard to reach high notes with ease.

The Angelus comes equipped with the Fishman GT1 pickups, which sound excellent and showcase the character of the guitar. It projects the highs and emphasizes the lows without making it sound too boomy.

If you are craving an acoustic-electric guitar that sounds great, is solidly built, versatile, comfortable to play, stage-worthy, and competitively priced, the PRS A60E fits the bill. It has some different tonal qualities that should not be overlooked — I think it can be a great guitar used for country and rock, especially in a full band situation.

It also comes with a hardshell case, which is great for gigging musicians or those of you that travel a lot and need that added protection. Even if you don't travel much, it is nice to know you have a safe place to store your cherished instrument. I've never been a fan of gig bags, so kudos to PRS for including a nice case at this price point.

Price: $1,099.00
PRSGuitars.com



Yamaha STORIA II Acoustic Guitar

By Ted Low

I have been spending some time getting to know this new acoustic by Yamaha, the STORIA II. Introduced at the 2019 Summer NAMM Show, Yamaha is positioning this instrument as one that lends itself to the younger generation, first-time players. "There is a segment of today's younger generation that craves an outlet for creativity and self-expression without aspiring to be the next guitar hero," said Shannon McKee, product marketing manager, Yamaha Guitar Group. "STORIA answers that need with aesthetically-pleasing guitars that appeal to fashion-conscious, casual new players."

After checking out this guitar, it is definitely not just an entry-level guitar for beginners. Still, the $400.00 price range does put it in reach of anyone serious about learning to play and even accomplished acoustic guitarists will find a lot to like about this guitar.

The guitar I am reviewing is the STORIA II, which is one of three models: STORIA I, STORIA II, and STORIA III. All three have concert body shapes and very similar specs, except for the top wood material differs. They all feature mahogany back and sides; however, the STORIA I has a solid Sitka spruce top, while the other two models have solid mahogany tops.

The quality in this guitar is evident from the moment you pick it up and feel around its body, neck, and edges, not to mention the sound that resonates from the soundhole when you strum or pick the strings. The slightly shorter body length (19 9/16"), 25" scale length, and narrow neck make it a dream to play. The sound is bright, and the projection is excellent. The STORIA II is also aesthetically pleasing with a walnut fingerboard and bridge, brass bridge pins, champagne-gold tuner, abalone and ivory soundhole, and semi-gloss finish.

All STORIAs come with a Yamaha passive undersaddle pickup, which is plugged in at the guitar strap post. This lends the look of the guitar to that of a vintage guitar. As there is no volume control, pair it with a cable that has volume control, and that will solve the problem.

Street price: $399.99
USA.Yamaha.com

Native Sons Good Harper Guitar Strap

By GGM Staff

If you have been looking for a comfortable, well-made, durable, and beautiful guitar strap that is made in the USA, look no further. Native Sons Goods hand makes their straps in Albuquerque, New Mexico from the finest materials.

We spent some time with the owners of Native Sons Goods at the 2019 Summer NAMM Show in Nashville and had a chance to learn more about their company and their straps. They offer a variety of colors and designs to match your style.

We checked out their Harper guitar strap which is in a gorgeous floral print in red, coral and pink on a black background. The backing material is a herringbone design made of hemp -- not only strong but sustainable. The strap is 2 inches wide, has silver finish hardware, English Bridle Leather end pieces with metal rivets, and is adjustable from 34" to 60". Besides hemp, they also offer a nylon option.

Price: $75.00
NativeSonsGoods.com

Córdoba Music Group: Leading the Way for Acoustic Innovation

By Alex Windsor

When Tim Miklaucic founded his guitar company in 1997, his goal was to offer high-quality classical guitars at an affordable price. Over the next twenty years, Córdoba Music Group evolved into a global leader of acoustic innovation. It began with using a thinner piece of wood for the top to create more resonance. From there, the builders took on a whole new ideology: nylon-string guitars are not JUST for classical players. Córdoba went on to replace the traditionally flat fingerboard with a radius fingerboard, which is a familiar comfort to electric guitarists. They also added a cutaway and electronics, making the instrument more versatile and becoming one of the first nylon-string companies to adopt modern guitar features. Córdoba's innovation didn't stop with their proprietary products; they acquired Guild guitars in 2014 and immediately began looking for ways to improve their design without compromising their legacy brand. They hired world-renowned luthier Ren Ferguson, formerly the Master Luthier of Gibson Acoustics, to breathe new life into Guild. The end result was a lighter and more resonant body. Today, Córdoba is a one-of-a-kind guitar company that has even attracted the attention of Disney, to design a guitar for their movie Coco. To get a better understanding of what they do, check out these two guitars that launched at NAMM this year: the Córdoba C5-CET Limited and the Guild F-250ce Deluxe Jumbo.

Córdoba C5-CET Limited

If you are looking for a nylon-string guitar that defies "classical" in almost every sense, then look no further. The Córdoba C5-CET is a wildly different take on a traditional instrument. One of the most obvious differences is the ultra-thin body, which not only makes it more comfortable to play but gives the sound a more balanced midrange. Like many of its siblings, this guitar also has a cutaway and a Fishman piezo pickup. However, what sets this particular model apart is the wood. While other Córdoba models typically consist of a solid cedar top and mahogany back and sides, the C5-CET Limited has a solid spruce top with spalted maple back and sides. Cedar is known for being a warm sounding wood, so swapping it out for spruce results in a brighter guitar. The spalted maple detailing around the guitar complements the sound and gives it an earthy appearance. The C5-CET is an excellent choice for someone looking to get the most out of a nylon-string guitar.

Price: $449.00
CordobaGuitars.com

Guild F-250CE Deluxe Jumbo

Another rebel in the family is the Guild F-250CE Deluxe Jumbo. Despite the large body size, this guitar is deceptively comfortable to hold thanks to its intuitive shape. The soft C-shaped mahogany neck and smooth Pau Ferro fingerboard provide additional comfort when playing. The deep sound hole enhances the bass tones, making it a powerful strumming tool. The wood consists of a solid spruce top and stunning flamed maple back and sides, giving the F-250CE a cutting voice and sustained tone. This guitar is also equipped with a Fishman AP1 with a Sonicore pickup, granting the player superior acoustic tone control. Guitarists seeking full-bodied tone and next-projection are encouraged to test drive the F-250CE Deluxe Jumbo.

Price: $599.00
GuildGuitars.com

MUSIC RELEASES

Erin Enderlin
Faulkner County
November 1, 2019

Miranda Lambert
Wildcard
November 1, 2019

Fenella
Fehérlófia
November 1, 2019

Moor Mother
Analog Fluids of Solid Black Holes
November 1, 2019

Janet Devlin
Saint of the Sinners
November 1, 2019

Davina & the Vagabonds
Sugar Drops
July 19, 2019

May Erlewine
That's My Home
November 1, 2019

Haim
Now I'm In It
November 1, 2019

Dua Lipa
Don't Start Now
November 1, 2019

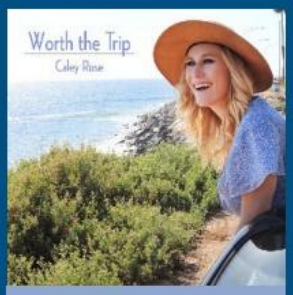
Gabriella Cilmi
Safe From Harm
November 1, 2019

Sigrid
Home To You
November 1, 2019

Noella Rain
Phoenix
November 2, 2019

Juliana Hatfield
Juliana Hatfield Sings the Police
November 15, 2019

Ice Cream
Fed Up
November 15, 2019



Caley Rose
Worth The Trip
November 22, 2019

Georgia
Seeking Thrills
January 10, 2020

Kesha
High Road
January 10, 2020

The Big Moon
Walking Like We Do
January 10, 2020

Halsey
Manic
January 17, 2020

Frances Quinlan
Likewise
January 31, 2020

Isobel Campbell
This Is No Other
January 31, 2020

Torres
Silver Tongue
January 31, 2020

Meghan Trainor
Treat Myself
January 31, 2020

La Roux
Supervision
February 7, 2020

Carly Pearce
Carly Pearce
February 14, 2020

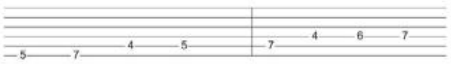
CocoRosie
Put The Shine On
March 6, 2020

MOVING BEYOND 4 CHORDS

By Leigh Fuge

By now, you've probably mastered many three chord songs, and you're singing and strumming your way through many hits, both ones you may have written and ones you may have learned. Now it's time to step things up. That elusive fourth chord can make or break a song and can really add a new dynamic to your playing.

For this lesson, we can once again call upon the A Major Scale to give us some guidance over what chords we can use.



The notes of this scale along with their interval numbers are:

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#

And we can also add a chord type to each interval as follows:

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
A	B	C#	D	E	F#	G#
Major	Minor	Minor	Major	Major	Minor	Diminished

In a previous issue, we talked a little about creating country chord progressions from the I IV V rule and applying them to a twelve-bar blues style structure. If we use that as our basis here, we could have a progression using the A, D and E chords.

A great way that we could spice up this progression would be to add the minVI chord, in this case the F#min.

This takes our standard I IV V and changes it to a I IV V VI. That doesn't mean we have to stick with that as a rule. The intervals don't have to fall in this order to retain the song's key. We could shift those intervals around a little.
Let's try it as a I VI IV V.

Or perhaps a V I IV VI.

You can try to come up with your own combinations as part of your own compositions. There are no rules. When I write, I like to start a section with the minVI chord when I want to add some tension or make a swift change from the rest of the track. I find it works well as a chord for a middle 8 or a bridge.

Many huge songs that use combinations of the I IV V and VI chords. Learn them all and see what takes your fancy. I'd recommend checking out:

- The Cranberries – Zombie – VI IV I V
- U2 – With Or Without You – I V VI IV
- Lynyrd Skynyrd – Tuesday's Gone – I V VI IV
- Iggy Pop – The Passenger – VI IV I V
- Lewis Capaldi – Someone You Loved – I V VI IV
- Ed Sheeran – Perfect – VI IV I V

There are many more out there to be discovered! Try it out yourself and see what you come up with!

FIGURING OUR FINGERSTYLE: Techniques for Beginners

By Alex Windsor

While strumming has its obvious advantages, such as establishing rhythm and building energy, the true voice of the instrument is pulled out through individually plucked strings. Since the birth of the guitar, the most common technique employs the bare fingers of the plucking hand and is known as fingerstyle guitar, or fingerpicking. This method can be used to create a softer, more intimate tone in the music. It is most commonly utilized in folk and classical guitar, but it can be utilized in just about any style.

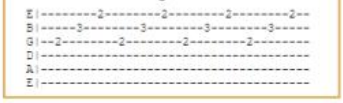
The key to fingerstyle is the proper use of the plucking hand, so we must first assign each to a finger. The most common approach is as follows: E, A, and D are all played by the thumb, G by the index, B by the middle, and high E by the ring (Figure 1). The thumb serves the bass line, while the other fingers support the harmonies/melodies. The hand will need to be at about a 45-degree angle for fingers to fit comfortably between the strings.

Figure 1

e -------- Ring (Third) Finger
B -------- Middle (Second) Finger
G -------- Index (First) Finger
D -------- Thumb
A -------- Thumb
E -------- Thumb

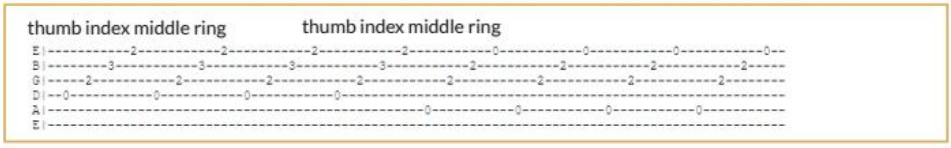
Start with an open D chord. Beginning with the A-note, the third string, pluck each of the three high strings one-by-one with the fatty tip of the assigned finger (Figure 2). As the string is plucked, it should catch the tip of the fingernail. Pluck hard to project the sound, but be careful not to bump into other strings. **Figure 2**

index middle ring



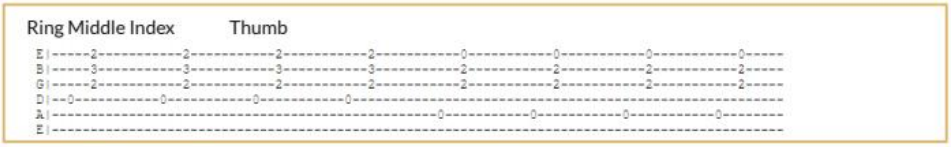
Next, let's add the thumb. Unlike the other three fingers, the thumb is angled more to the side, but still within reach of the thumbnail. Pluck the same three high strings of the open D chord again, but this time add the open D string, played with the thumb **(Figure 3)**. Once that feels comfortable, practice the same exercise on an open A chord. The thumb will move from the open D string to the open A string, and the other fingers will stay where they are (in some cases, the fingers on the three high strings may jump to the lower strings, but their position to one another will always remain the same). **Figure 3**

thumb index middle ring thumb index middle ring



Now let's play the three high strings together and alternate with the thumb. Start by plucking with the thumb on the open D string on counts one and three, followed by plucking the three high strings on counts two and four. Play through this exercise four times, and then switch to an open A chord. Again, the thumb will move from the open D string to the open A string, and the other fingers will stay where they are **(Figure 4).** Practice transitioning between these chords so that the movement is fluid. To add a little more bass action, replace the open string with the one right below it on count three, such as the D string to the A string. **Figure 4**

Ring Middle Index Thumb



MIRROR, MIRROR ON THE WALL: Vocal Tips to Improve Performance

By Traci De Leon

Singing and playing acoustic guitar at the same time is the ultimate form of multi-tasking: your left and right hands must think independently; your brain is recalling chords, lyrics, and melody simultaneously; and your soul has to shine through enough to be emotionally compelling to your audience. It's no wonder that one, or more, of those components are likely to suffer and go astray during your acoustic set. Here are some helpful vocal tips to ensure that your performance is seamless and professional!

Once you've perfected your guitar performance, set aside time in front of a mirror to give your vocals some much needed one on one time. Practicing your vocals separately from your instrument will provide you with a better muscle memory map for show day. Practice singing a cappella in front of a mirror — go ahead and get up close and personal and observe a few things:

1. **Watch for tension in your jaw.**
   Too much jaw tension can lead to stress and tightness of your vocal cords. Practice loosening your jaw by opening wide and yawning. Observe the jaw joints just below your ear lobes by pressing gently with your index fingers. You will feel a slight indentation where your fingertips sink in; this is optimal jaw space for you. Aim for opening your mouth wide when you sing to keep tension and heaviness out of your performance.
   Here is an excellent jaw stretch exercise to do before singing and throughout the day to bring an end to troublesome tension:
   - Open your mouth and stick out your tongue as if you are pointing it towards your feet. Now, look up at the ceiling with your eyeballs, making sure you aren't tilting your head back.
   - Inhale deeply through your mouth, hold for three seconds, and then exhale the breath while opening the jaw slightly more.
   - Repeat up to eight times, and then relax.

   You will fill enhanced blood circulation around those jaw joints and more freedom to open wide.

2. **Watch your tongue when you sing.**
   Now that you have a healthy amount of jaw space going on, you will be able to clearly see what your tongue is doing when you sing. Watch out for the tendency to pull your tongue backward, or to retract the tongue toward the throat when singing. This is a common problem many singers have because the tongue and larynx are connected.
   While singing with a lower larynx can produce a darker, taller sound, be aware of forming a habit of keeping your tongue retracted. This will limit the amount of coloration in your voice and ultimately produce a more classical sound than you are wanting.
   To understand the difference in the vocal tone your tongue placement can make, try these two exercises and note what you hear.
   1. First, look in the mirror, drop your jaw and say "aaaa" as in the word CAT.
      Repeat three times with your tongue resting on the floor of the mouth with the tip of the tongue relaxed near the bottom lip. Don't push your tongue toward your lip, just note how it rests there making contact.
      Repeat the exercise a few times with this forward tongue position.

   2. Next, drop the jaw and pull the tongue backward and say the same "aaaa" sound.
      Repeat the "aaaa" sound three times and note the darker, almost "swallowed" sound you are producing.
      Also, take note of any tension you feel and consider how fatigued your voice might be after habitually singing with a retracted tongue!

Keeping adequate jaw space and a neutral tongue position may take time, so don't give up! The more forward tongue position will produce a brighter sound, which will more easily cut through the mix and have more presence when coupled with your guitar. Practicing this technique will definitely assist you in "Working smarter, not harder" during your performances, so find a mirror and settle in for the win.

ACOUSTIC GUITAR AMPLIFIERS– What You'll Want To Know

By Alex Windsor

With acoustic guitars, every fiber of their being contributes to its tone. The strings you use, the material of the nut, bridge, and pins, the woods used for the neck, top, sides, and back, the bracing, the binding … literally everything. It's truly a sum of its parts. No component of its design and construction is not important. The premier acoustic guitar makers all know this and have crafted and built their guitars to have a signature tone, resonance, and timbre.

"The amplifier is as important as the guitar itself."

When you are performing with an acoustic guitar outside of small settings where your guitar's natural volume can fill its space (home, practice, studio), you will need an amplifier to amplify its voice. It stands to reason that the amplifier used with your acoustic guitar is as essential to its tone as the guitar itself. This is such an important point that most people overlook that I'll say it again. The amplifier is as important as the guitar itself for tone.

Ideally, your amplifier is 100 percent transparent and precisely amplifies your guitar's pristine tone in every way, but that's not reality, not even close. Luckily, there are amplifiers specifically made to be used with acoustic guitars and can add a great deal to what your guitar and amplifier combined can create.

I adore amp shopping because it's like Christmas on "rinse and repeat." Your imagination can run wild with the possibilities. After I breathe into a paper bag for a few moments, I focus on what to look for when amp shopping. Some of these things may seem obvious, but we'll talk about each with a little more "English" for good measure. What you want to focus on are the three Ps: Possibilities, Performance, and Portability.

"Possibilities, Performance and Portability"

With **Possibilities**, we're talking about what it can do for you (aka its features). Are you looking to sing and play through your amp? Do you want the purest, non-coloring circuit possible? Do you want the Space Shuttle to be envious of its controls? The amp's features are what you want to focus on. Figure out what you want in an amp. Educate yourself on this and look for amps with those features. Don't worry about power or wattage as we'll talk about this later.

On to **Performance**. Let's say that after shopping around, you've found an amp that has everything you want, and it's in your price range. Now it's time to plug *your* guitar in and hear what it can really do. It's recommended to do this in as quiet an environment as possible and with your eyes closed. What this will probably mean, for most, is a noisy music store with a cacophony of sound swirling around you; but do the best you can to use your ears and … listen.

A technical recommendation here is to turn the amp's tone controls all the way up (Bass, Mid, Treble) and back out what you don't want (like turning the Treble down for a little less of it). This is because most amps' tone controls are passive, meaning that they only cut frequencies. Turning the tone controls all the way up allows the amp to give you everything it has to offer, and you be the judge of whether you like the way it sounds or not. Now, play. Is there definition, clarity, fullness, and warmth? Sing and play along. Does it compliment you? How does the way the amp sound make you feel? Do you want to marry it and live happily ever after?

"Features are what you want to focus on."

Amps mainly fall into three camps: ones that use vacuum tubes (aka tube), solid-state, or digital. Each has pluses and minuses, but cost and personal preference are usually the guides here. Play through several of each type but here's a general reference to what you'll get:

- **Tube**: Beautiful warmth and clarity but higher cost, not as rugged and requires periodic maintenance.
- **Solid State**: Low cost, low maintenance, and lots of options but not the most dazzling tone.
- **Digital**: Sparkling clarity and copious features but higher cost and not as warm as tube.

Again, nothing beats playing through an amp with your guitar and hearing it for yourself and how it makes you feel.

I talk about **Portability** last because I recommend not being too worried about power, which translates into weight/a heavy amp. A short, true story as an example. Years ago, my band opened up for Cake at the Star Bar in Atlanta (crazy, I know). Their singer, John, plugged his acoustic guitar directly into a little Fender Champ tube amp, which has one control, Volume, and pointed the amp back at the drummer. The sound guy put a mic in front of it. You know what, it sounded awesome! The sheer simplicity of this set up was its crown jewel. With most clubs and venues, they are going to mic or DI your amp and run it through the PA. So don't feel the need to get a large, heavy amp that will blow your hair back. You do want one with enough power to have an undeniable presence; between 40 to 100 watts is about the sweet spot (100 to 200 watts for stereo amps).

Now, what you have all been waiting for, the GGM Acoustic Guitar Amplifier recommendations. Without further ado, they are (envelope please) ...

GGM Acoustic Guitar Amplifier recommendations:

Tube
- Fender Super-Champ X2
- Fender Deluxe Reverb
- Rivera Sedona Lite 25

Solid State
- Fender Acoustic SFX
- Fishman Loudbox Artist PRO-LBX-600
- Marshall AS50D
- Roland AC-60 Acoustic Chorus

Digital
- Acoustic A1000
- Hughes & Kettner ERA 1
- Vox VX50 GTV

Now it's up to you to play through some amps as the right one will find you. Superior acoustic guitar tone takes blood, sweat, and tears, but it's so worth it. Once you come to know it and have it, it'll be your friend for life.

Saddle up, it's time to ride!

ACOUSTIC GUITAR EFFECTS PEDALS– Shapes of Your Sonic Goodness

By Steve McKinley

The acoustic guitar is the beginning, middle, and end of so much of what is music; it continues to thrive and flourish to this day. With our golden age of gear that we're basking in, there are beautiful sounding and super useful acoustic guitar effects pedals that will glorify your guitar's natural organic tone and have you sparkle and shine beyond new possibilities. Here we'll be taking a look at acoustic guitar effects pedals and making recommendations on some winners. Some are geared towards utility purposes while others are for helping you dial in flavors of your guitar's golden voice.

"An elixir of the gods."

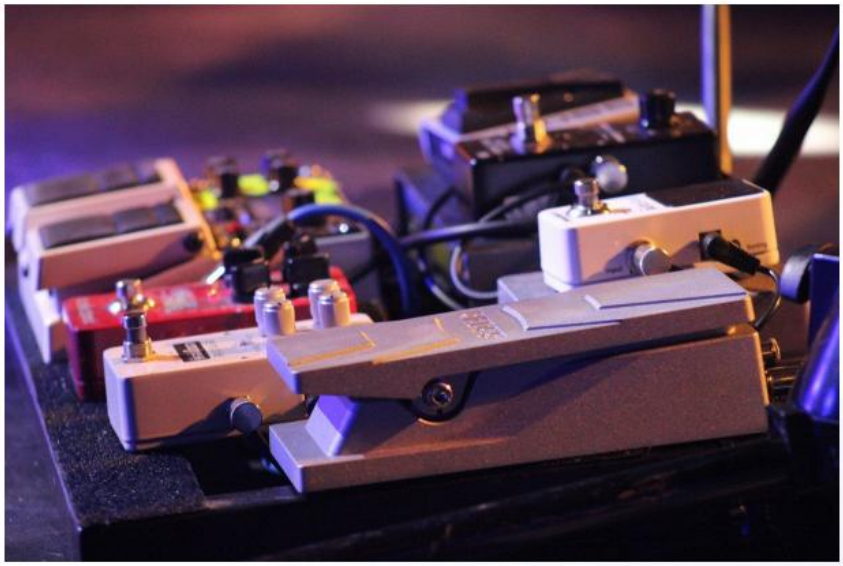
First and foremost, a high-quality tuner pedal is an absolute must! Admittedly, the clip-on models are super easy to use and so convenient. They're fine for home and studio use. Still, a dedicated pedal is recommended as you don't want your tuner to be overloaded with an avalanche of band, crowd or venue noises in a live performance setting while it tries to isolate your guitar strings' vibrations for tuning. Your tuner pedal should come first in your pedal chain, so it has your guitar's most pure signal. So your guitar should be plugged directly into your tuner (with a quality guitar cable like a Mogami, DiMarzio, Planet Waves, et. al.) and then on to your next pedal and/or to your amp.

An important aspect to keep in mind with tuning is to do so in the area of the neck where you play the most. As much as we love our guitars, they are imperfect beings, and while it may be perfectly in tune in the first position, it won't be *as perfect* high up on the neck and vice versa.

GGM Tuner Recommendations:
- BOSS TU-3 Chromatic Pedal Tuner
- Peterson StroboStomp HD Tuner Pedal
- TC Electronics PolyTune 3 Pedal Tuner

"Righteous tone like art"

Next in line should be your preamp pedal, which is where the magic happens as it will have the most significant impact on your guitar's tone (this is where you want to spend the money). They commonly have utility features like ¼" and XLR output jacks to send your guitar's signal to your amp and/or directly to the PA mixing board or recording console, phase inversion, a tuner and a mute function (all good stuff for your guitar's toolkit). More importantly, they allow you to tailor your guitar's sound and



texture by adding volume and shaping its tone. From boosting specific frequencies and cutting background noise and adding some other uber useful effects like compression, EQ, and modulation, they are the secret sauce of your guitar's voice. Recognize that many acoustic guitars have a preamp built into them, but they may not get you that priceless tone -- righteous tone, like art, you know it when you see it. The best suggestion here is to take your guitar (and tuner) to the guitar store and try out different ones. Once you plug in and start playing through preamps, you will know in seconds if you can't live without one.

GGM Preamp Recommendations:
- BBE Acoustimax
- BOSS AD-2 Acoustic Preamp
- Fishman ToneDEQ AFX Preamp EQ with DI Box and Dual FX
- LR Baggs Venue DI

At this point, you are on solid guitar ground. Guitar, tuner, preamp, and amp … all checked off the list. If you are happy with your guitar rig and its sound, it is time to start performing and climbing the ladder to your future mega-stardom. If you want more, now we begin to walk on the *wild side*. With guitar effects, we're talking tremolo (the grandmother of all effects), overdrive, modulation (chorus, delay, reverb), and all the other kinds of sonic goodness just waiting to be released! As musicians, we are rule learners and breakers. YOU are the key to what is possible. Now before you fly to the music store to max out your credit cards on everything you can lay your hands on, here are some effects that have proven quite impressive with an acoustic guitar.

GGM Effects Recommendations:
- Voodoo Lab Tremolo
- Fender Smother Acoustic Overdrive
- Walrus Audio Julia Chorus
- Strymon Timeline Delay

"Where the magic happens."

With guitar effects, as cliché as it sounds, it is true how the possibilities are limited only by your imagination. You have got musical soul searching to do to find your guitar's voice(s) and how much and in what ways you want to expand its capabilities. Imagine yourself on stage in front of an adoring ocean of fans with your beloved acoustic guitar perfectly in tune, when strummed sounds like a choir of angels, and with an impressive array of effects dangling dangerously at your toes. It's an elixir of the gods … controlled by you.

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LAST CHANCE TO GET YOUR GUITAR GIRL MAGAZINE 2019 CALENDAR

Guitar Girl Magazine's 2019 calendar is a beautiful wall calendar featuring some of our top guitarists we have showcased throughout the years. This 11 x 8.5-inch calendar features the extremely talented Angeline Saris on the cover, followed by 12 months each showcasing a fabulous female guitar player followed by a bonus four-month pre-planner for 2020 and two pages for notes.

Order yours today for $14.99 on our site at GuitarGirlMag.com.

January
Nikki Stringfield

February
Francesca Simone

March
Angeline Saris

April
Lindsay Ell

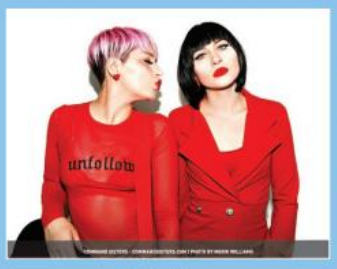
May
Nik West

June
Arielle

July
Melia Maccarone

August
Alexx Calise

September
Tristan McIntosh



October
Command Sisters

November
Ali Handal

December
Yvette Young

Pre-Planner
Jessi Pugh

Notes
Meg Williams

Notes
Anouck André

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#GUITARGIRL

Every month, we select a guitarist from social media that has tagged themselves with #guitargirlmag to be featured on our website and here in our magazine. So, head on over to **Instagram** and tag yourself.

YOU MAY BE NEXT!

GRACE MILTON

Photo by Marco Noisey

About Me: My name is **Grace Milton**. I am a Georgia native and have been surrounded by music since the day I was born. My father is a musician, and he helped bring my love for music to life. I grew up listening to classics such as Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, America, and Fleetwood Mac. I remember sitting in my car seat, begging my parents to play "Sandman" by America, just "one more time"! When I was only 6 years old, I wrote my first song on my father's twelve-string acoustic guitar. In fact, I actually named the song "America" — I guess I've been a fan-girl since the day I knew what music was! When I was 12, I was singing to a karaoke track of "Take It All" by Adele, and my mother overheard from the kitchen. That was the day when we realized I had a voice and needed to show it to the world. At 13, my parents bought me my first guitar — an Oscar Schmidt by Washburn. My father taught me the basics, and I taught myself the rest. That guitar went through many things with me in middle school and high school. At 18, as a graduation present, I was given a Taylor 110ce. I fell in love with it the moment I got it in my hands. Many songs have been written on that guitar, and many more to come. Since then, I have taught myself the piano, electric bass, and keyboard. After high school, I was signed to an indie record label out of Marietta. I began gigging at local bars and restaurants around town. Soon after, that grew to booking gigs and weddings out of town, which then led to a small tour in Australia. I traveled to Canberra, Sydney, and Melbourne, singing my original songs and making wonderful friends. Today, a year later, I am still gigging around town, starting the process of recording my first EP in Nashville, writing songs, and about to make my move to Nashville to further my experience and education in music.

My Inspiration: My inspirations include Adele, Norah Jones, Lana Del Rey, Amy Winehouse, and Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young. My parents also inspire me every day to continue to create and share my music with the world, and I can't thank them enough for their constant love and support.

My Gear: I never leave my house without my Taylor 110ce and my Fender Squier Stratocaster. At my gigs, I use a Bose L1 Model II.

R A C O U S T I C F E O I J Q H W O P D
D G J E N I H S N U S I M E H O B Y N S
F U K U B C T D C S E O R O L Y A T Z N
S L A D E P S T C E F F E N B R N X Y N
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O S A J P L U C K X Q Q Y Q B F E M O R
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Q J B Z Q A U Y M V H F N T H M I A I T
J P U A L A C I S S A L C D I I A J A I
R S U N D E V V D I A G G Q A R W F N U
Y X M K D G M J N V M Y R A M N A E M G
V F I N G E R S T Y L E E G D U X P U S
Q E P P O P E I D D A M K L C V G T Z R
D V D Q A N N Z O Q T Y L D A M P S U P

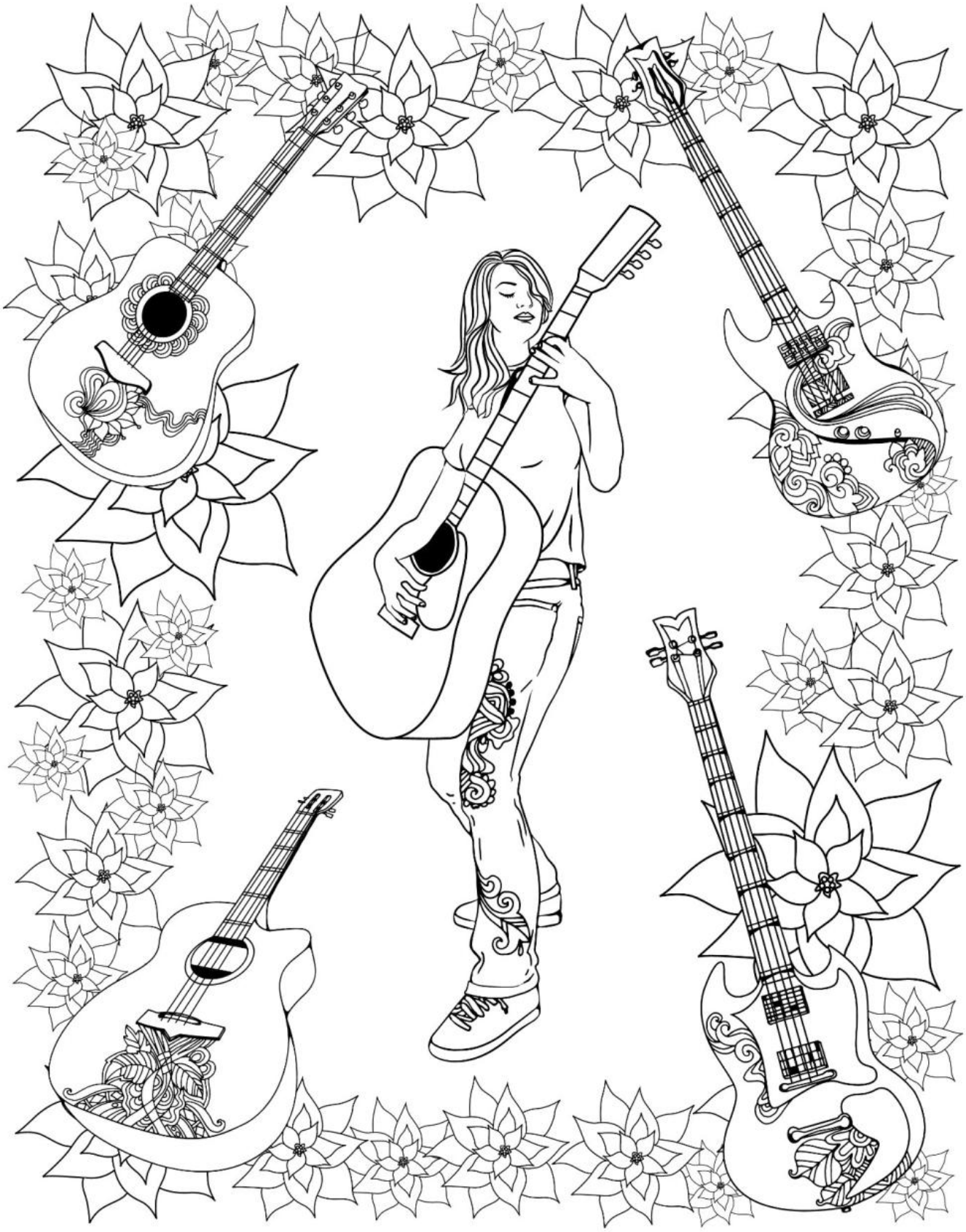
WORD LIST

ACOUSTIC
CARTER FAMILY
CLASSICAL
EFFECTS PEDALS
EMISUNSHINE
FINGERSTYLE
ISBIN
MADDIE POPPE
MARTIN
MEAN MARY
000CJR
PRS GUITARS
SHUBB CAPO
SISTERHOOD
STIRLING
TAYLOR
TONEWOODAMP
YAMAHA STORIA

TRIVIA

1. This month's #Guitar Girl is .
2. What is the name of Tegan and Sara's new book?
3. Amythyst Kiah attended what college?
4. The Carter Family released what album recently?
5. Maddie Poppe won what TV show?
6. Lindsey Stirling's fifth studio album is named after what Greek goddess?
7. Sharon Isbin will be the first guitarist in this organization's 59-year history to receive this award in their upcoming show.
8. What two artists make up The Sisterhood Band?
9. Brooke White recorded her album *Calico* in Los Angeles, but she really wanted to record it in what city?
10. The Taylor Builder's Edition Grand Auditorium K24ce is made of what wood?

Mind Game answers on page 80



MIND GAME ANSWERS:

1. Alyce Lindberg.
2. High School.
3. Amythyst Kiah
   attended what
   college?
4. The Carter Family
   released what album
   recently?
5. American Idol
6. Artemis
7. 2020 Musical America
   Instrumentalist of the
   Year
8. Alyssa Bonagura and
   Ruby Stewart
9. Nashville
10. Koa

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WHAT WE'RE READING NOW

The Classic FM Family Music Box
Author: Sam Jackson & Tim Lihoreau
White Lion Publishing (2019)

Family Music Box is quite an interesting book for young children interested in classical music. It was created by Sam Jackson and Tim Lihoreau, as well as Classic FM, the world's largest classical music radio station. The front of the book is interactive with eight buttons to push to hear snippets of classical music from famous composers.

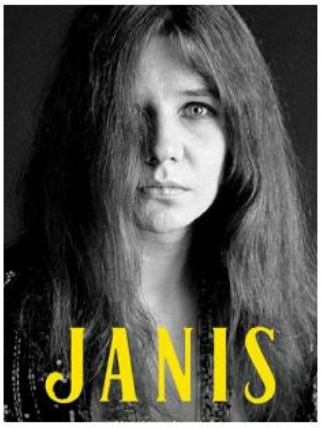
The book is an excellent introduction to the world of classical music. It is comprised of brief background information of famous composers along with beautiful illustrations. Beginning with the Renaissance period, through Baroque, Classical, Romantic, and on through the Twentieth Century, readers will also receive recommended recordings. While classical music was also very much male-dominated, they did pay homage to Ethel Smyth from the early 1900s.

For today's great classical female artists, we featured Sharon Isbin in this issue. There are plenty out talented female classical musicians out there today, so we suggest you pick up this book, follow Ms. Isbin, and become inspired!

Tegan & Sara High School
Authors: Tegan and Sara Quin
Publisher: MCD (2019

Celebrated Canadian pop duo, **Tegan and Sara**, have just released an expertly written memoir chronicling their journey to indie superstardom, beginning from their tumultuous secondary school years in Calgary, Alberta. The aptly titled ***High School*** is written from both sisters' perspectives navigating through the twins' awkward years. Experimentations with drugs, first loves, struggles with sexuality, finding their own unique voices as twins, and ultimately the local battle-of-the-bands contest that would lead to their first record deal.

Much like their studio albums, *High School* is an incredibly captivating, emotional, and creatively written body of work that details the twins' unbreakable bond in a fascinating day-to-day fashion, reading more like a fast-paced **Young Adult** novel versus your typical memoir. If you haven't yet heard of Tegan and Sara or heard their music, *High School* is an excellent introduction to the LGBT icons, who have collectively sold over a million records, recorded eight studio albums, and captivated audiences the world over.



Janis Her Life and Music
Author: Holly George-Warren
Publisher: Simon & Schuster (2019)

You had me at Introduction! To see the impact that Janis Joplin had on so many women in music is profound, actually across genders. She was a trailblazer in a male-dominated industry and faced sexism from the press and MI professionals. Famed author Holly George-Warren has written a new autobiography about the life and music of one of the most talented musicians that faced many challenges in her short life.

I was fortunate enough to attend this year's AMERICANAFEST where George-Warren was on a panel discussing her new book about Joplin's life and the many challenges she faced from her family, her community where she was raised in Texas, and from fellow classmates in high school and at college. She was influenced by the Beatnik style, so she dressed differently. Becoming more defiant at home and engaging more in the blues and rock 'n' roll scene, she eventually left home and hitchhiked her way across the country, ending up in San Francisco.

There are many fascinating details in the book including excerpts of Joplin's letters to her parents. Stories of depression, drugs, and her insatiable sexual appetite with Leonard Cohen even writing "Chelsea Hotel No. 2" about her. Fans of Joplin know her story, and George-Warren does an excellent job bringing more interesting details to light in this well-researched autobiography.

Adult reading

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Alexx Calise is an accomplished singer, guitarist and songwriter. Perhaps best known for her hit song, "Cry", which became a staple on the show "Dance Moms" and boasts millions of hits on YouTube, Calise's raw emotion, heart-and soul-lyrics and unmistakable vibrato have impacted thousands of young girls all over the world. Calise is currently working on new solo material and songs for licensing, and she will soon be releasing a new EP with other music project, Batfarm. In addition to her musical pursuits, she also works in public relations and marketing and marketing department and owns her own party entertainment business. When not playing shows or writing music, she enjoys horror movies, exercising or taking a well-deserved nap.

Traci De Leon: Even the best singers need a little coaching from time to time, and that's where Traci De Leon comes in. Traci has been offering her services as a vocal coach to professional singers and recording artists since 1997, and is widely considered one of the leading contemporary singing specialists in the U.S. kTraci's private studio in Fairfield, California is frequented by singers of all genres, all of whom come to experience her unique and customized approach to teaching. On top of this, Traci also offers online lessons for her long-distance students.

Leigh Fuge is a professional guitarist and tutor from the UK. He works as a session guitarist, plays with a number of live bands, writes for various high-profile guitar publications and works daily with his own music students to develop their skills and careers. He is passionate about sharing knowledge and helping aspiring players hit their potential with technical and song writing abilities.

Vanessa Izabella is a professional guitarist that started playing music at a young age. Progressing through high school, Vanessa was playing and performing on multiple instruments including guitar, piano, and trumpet. She was awarded a scholarship to attend Berklee College of Music in Boston, MA. During her time there, she studied the guitar playing of such influences as Pat Martino, Slash, Pat Metheny, John Scofield, Eric Johnson, and many others. After graduating with a degree in Music Business, she went on to work with such artists as Pat Metheny and Christian McBride. Vanessa has traveled the world playing guitar, visiting countries such as France, Germany, Egypt, Italy, Japan, South America and the Caribbean. She has performed on the bill with such renown artists as Darius Rucker, LA Sno, KISS, Skid Row Paramore, and Joan Jett. She is currently recording and performing as the front woman for rock trio, BAST. www.vanessaizabella.com

Chuck Lapinsky is a professional photographer based in San Diego. He shoots portraits, concerts, bands, musicians, models, and personal projects.

Emily Levin is an Atlanta based photographer who is passionate about live music and photography with a specialized skill of concert photography, band promo, smoke bombs, and portraits.

Lynnay Della Lucé was born in Morristown, NJ and grew up in northern New Jersey. In 2009, she came to Atlanta to pursue better music and job opportunities and quickly made a name for herself in the local scene. She is a multi-instrumentalist playing guitar, bass, and drums as well as a singer and songwriter. Her past projects include Chaos, Rocket 88, Project X, and Ballbreakers (Atlanta's All-Female AC/DC Tribute).

Jack Lue: I'm best known as GNR's first photographer, and my early work from the Sunset Strip back in the early '80's. I can actually say I used film!

Steve McKinley is the bass player for Joel Kosche (of Collective Soul) in his solo band and for the Led Zeppelin tribute Led Zepplified. He's been part of the Atlanta music scene for years playing in bands (i.e. Julius Pleaser, Sid Vicious Experience, Pretty Vacant et al) and has recorded and toured throughout the Southeast. His songs have been played on the radio, he has appeared on television and is an ASCAP member. With his electronics skills and experience, he runs Atlanta Tube Amp and Steve McKinley Electronics and is an Instructor on JamPlay.com. He roots for Atlanta United, works on cars and drinks his coffee strong, hot and black.

Alison Richter interviews musicians, producers, engineers, and other industry professionals.

Victoria Shaffer's shockingly old soul explains her obsession with music history and passion for classic Rock 'n' Roll. As a student, Victoria graduated with a degree in English and is currently pursuing a master's to continue her growth as a writer. She strives to successfully combine her two obsessions by writing about the musicians and musical events that motivate and inspire her.

Kirk Stauffer is a Seattle-based photographer who has two passions - live music and photography. Over 10 years ago he began to combine them and has covered nearly 2000 performances to date. His photos have been published commercially, featured in Rolling Stone magazine, and one found itself on the front cover of Pollstar magazine. Kirk has been a contributing photographer for Paste Magazine, LiveDaily, No Depression and Back Beat Seattle, and is a regular SXSW attendee.

Samantha Stevens has been singing along with the radio for as long as she can remember. Guided by a love for music, she spent the better part of her childhood performing in classical and contemporary choirs. But straight out of high school she decided that she wanted to see the world, and so she did what any young adventurer would do...she joined the navy. An entire world of sounds, music, and stories opened up to her, and she found herself inspired by it all. In 2015, she retired from the Royal Canadian Navy after over a decade of service. Since then she has achieved a BA in literature, will soon have a MA in journalism, and is even a trained journalist and reporter. Currently living near Montreal, Quebec, Canada, Samantha has written for a wide variety of publications including *Spill Magazine*, *Stereo Embers Magazine*, and the *North Bay Nugget*. She still sings for the sheer joy of it.

Alex Windsor is a passionate musician and educator with over 15 years of experience. While she holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music with an emphasis in Jazz Studies (Bass), she has also extensively studied rock, blues, and classical guitar. She currently serves as the Educational Affairs Specialist for Guitar Center Lessons. Alex can be found regularly performing around the greater Los Angeles area.

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